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A P R O D I G Y.

A Tale of Music.

BY THE AUTHOR

OF

“MODERN GERMAN MUSIC,” “ROCCABELLA,” &c. &c.

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.

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TO

CHARLES DICKENS, Esq.,

AS A POOR EXPRESSION OF ADMIRATION, GRATITUDE, AND
AFFECTION, ON THE PART OF

THE AUTHOR.

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A PRODIGY.

PART THE FIRST.

NEW ACQUAINTANCES.

CHAPTER I.

MISTRESS GALATEA.

NUMBER Seven of the Lower Pavement—a suburb of Blackchester, a town in one of our midland counties—was, when this story begins, inhabited by Miss Galatea Whitelamb,—by courtesy, Mistress Whitelamb.

The projectors of the Lower Pavement had planned it to be the entrance of a Crescent, circling gardens with a fountain ;

—from which crescent an Upper Pavement (also to consist of some sixteen houses) was to lead into Royalty Square, a quadrangle of larger mansions still, designed for centre to the court quarter of Blackchester. — Architects will have their dreams, and capitalists theirs.—The prosperity of Blackchester had smouldered; and the architect's idea had been only realised to the extent of eight houses on the Lower Pavement, at the farther end of which a rude hoarding had long shut out all hope of crescent, square, or any other upper vain-glory of the vision coming to pass. But the situation was high and healthy, and the small houses were neatly built: and in Number Seven of these it was that, after twenty-five years of experience of what had stood with her for the dissipation and bustle of Blackchester, Mistress Whitelamb, on the decease of a relative, was by his bequest established with her small competence.

A being more faithful-hearted and unselfish than herself never existed to make a lonely man's home comfortable. But she was prejudiced to a degree, which the young

people of to-day will find it hard to credit. Her heart and soul had been devoted to keeping the house of her cousin, the manager of the Blackchester Waterworks. Mr. Smalley, made a widower at forty, had honourably received the orphaned daughter of a clergyman, a distant relative, into his house, till such time as she might establish herself elsewhere. That time never came. The small Galatea—an insignificant formal young person of no conceivable age, who had never been courted by lover, neither “had taken steps that way” (as she was used to confide to Miss Ann Ogg),—had, from her first arrival, so bent herself to enhance the creature-comforts of every one under the roof of the Waterworks, by aid of her earnest good will and incomparable sweetness of temper,—that the idea of her moving thence, or of her marrying her relative, never once presented itself to a single creature, even in Blackchester,—albeit there, incredible though it may appear, a few bitter tongues were to be found.—Mr. Smalley was a silent, but not an inhospitable man—a man with tastes above the average (he had an organ built into his back-parlour

wall); and Miss Galatea was quiet, devoted to please him, and a capital cook. And thus the two had spent twenty-five years together, without a single jarring word—or one bad dinner.

But no English spinster to come will exist in any provincial town of ours, who, unless she be a pauper workwoman, or has lost the use of her limbs, can by any possibility live and see as little beyond her own boundaries as Mistress Galatea. Her fears would fill one book ;—her aversions another. She was the only inhabitant of Blackchester who had never stirred a mile on the railroad which joined the town to Stutchbury ; though she would have walked alone twenty miles through the night to nurse any one who had belonged to Mr. Smalley. When pressed on the subject, she would say “ that she had no wish to try the new conveyance. —She saw the smoke of the trains crossing the viaduct several times a day, and by them knew what the time must be ; but she took her air on the Lower Pavement when she had not to go down shopping into Blackchester.”—Though she was liberal to all

manner of poor persons, whether they were Wesleyans or Roman Catholics, she declined consorting on an equality with Dissenters—particularly Quakers—“so prim, dear Miss Ann, and nothing going on among them. I wish you had seen the face of that Mr. Openshaw—Number Two, you know—when he came in that night to talk of the Christmas Flannel Society, and when Mr. Ogg, your good brother, proposed a rubber for love after the business was over.”—Such are all of Mrs. Galatea’s peculiarities that need be noted for the present; such had been all her history. To look upon, she was a short, round, pink woman, scrupulously neat, and with a row of tiny bamboo-coloured curls over her forehead; renewed twice in the year, according to the pattern which had lived with and been approved by Mr. Smalley.

But even Miss Galatea was not proof against surprise.—The peace of Number Seven, Lower Pavement, was, four years after she had taken up her residence there, shaken to its centre, as under:

“Here is a letter for thee, Galatea White-

lamb," said Joshua Openshaw, presenting himself one summer morning before the open window where the lady was sitting modestly screened by a flower-box full of stocks—and tranquilly busy with her needle—"a letter left with our maid by mistake, and a letter, I expect, from some part abroad. Thee has eighteen-pence to pay."

There was no help for it save to ask Number Two to step in;—seeing that for Mistress Whitelamb to raise her voice in parley with her antipathetic neighbour,—still more to talk about a foreign letter, so that other inhabitants of the Lower Pavement might become aware of such a wonder,—would, indeed, as she would have expressed it, have been "undue to herself." Accordingly she rose,—herself opened the street door with an admonitory "There is a mat, Mr. Openshaw,"—and the Friend stalked quietly in, holding up the strange-looking epistle.

"Thee wilt perceive, Galatea Whitelamb," said he, "that this letter has been long on the way, by the date of the postmark—Seventh of fourth month, my son says—and

the direction might have been clearer; for this might either be Swy, which my son says is Two in German, or Seven; and I expect the mistake has arisen thus. But it is now safe in thy hands. Farewell.”—And out stalked quietly Joshua Openshaw, not waiting to be thanked, neither to receive his eighteen-pence.

It was a good half hour before Miss Galatea had recovered composure sufficiently to enable her to examine such an over-sea curiosity as a letter from Germany—still more to forgive “the exceeding unpleasantness” of the receipt of such a document being known to “that prying Mr. Openshaw.”—She began to ponder her solitary piece of knowledge regarding German geography and manners, which was, that when Mr. Smalley had been abroad—his first and only foreign holiday—before she went to keep house at the Waterworks,—he had tried the organ at Fulda.—Not expecting anything in the form of offset, or poor relation, or cousin, more or less removed, she thought it was twenty pities to break the seal;—it was so large a seal,—one nearly as

large as a crown piece.—But her placid curiosity came to an end when, after having cut round the wax with her scissors, she read the news which is here to be told,—the letter being not so much a letter, as an arrest made by one in Want on a person supposed to be in the smooth waters of competence,—and a cry for instant help.

Mistress Galatea had totally forgotten that even so thorough an Englishwoman as herself might have so conspicuous a relation as an Irish cousin married in Germany. But it was so. Her mother had been a Prowse; and her mother's eldest sister had married into Ireland;—a strange scrambling match, which had ended in the husband going off to Canada, and the wife dying somewhere abroad.—This Irish aunt's daughter had married some foreigner, “I have no doubt,” ruminated Mistress Galatea, “with a pigtail.”—And now, this foreign cousin being widowed, had apparently bethought herself for the first time—cousins will do such things—of a relative left in easy circumstances by some stupid old man's decease.

The widow—Baroness Einstern—began her communication by voluble complaints of what she had suffered during her wedded life.—Her defunct lord and master had encouraged a natural son of his (who had turned out a thorough reprobate) to calumniate and maltreat her. He had gambled away the family property and all her jewels. His death had been a real blessing:—and now, being an Englishwoman by origin, she could not bear to think that her two children should be aliens. The younger one, when scarcely a year old, could spell syllables and name pictures in his book. He was ten years of age. She would have him brought up in England; and as the Baroness had heard from every one that knew Blackchester of the goodness and great experience of her Cousin Galatea—also that there was a Spa in the neighbourhood of the town (a fact, let it be told, amounting to another architectural dream, projected over a well of rusty iron-water)—she resolved to come to her own country on her decrepit means, and to shelter under the wing of her Cousin Galatea's goodness

and experience.—She was already far on her way; but stated that an answer, mentioning every particular of expense—lodgings, servants' wages, and the like—if sent by return of post, would meet her at Frankfurt.

Now—even if good Mistress Galatea had received the above epistle in due course after its having been written,—it must be whispered that she might have been embarrassed as to answering it;—supposing her willing to take a German Baroness on her hands at a moment's warning—and able to speak to the inquiries put forth. For it had been said in Blackchester by envious folk, distanced by her cookery-book, that she was a chary penwoman, because she could not spell.—As it fell out, she could merely sit still in great bewilderment, through which shot a ray of some gratification, and another of loyal perplexity.—“Baroness!—I don't think that even Mr. Openshaw would have taken all those liberties with that letter if he had known that a Baroness writ it;”—but while she

trotted to her work-box to find in her purse the eighteen-pence owing for the postage of this amazing document, "If Aunt Sarah Jane's daughter *be* a Baroness," it occurred to her, "the Queen surely — not me — would have been the more proper channel to apply to."

CHAPTER II.

A BARONESS AND HER SONS.

AUNT Sarah Jane's daughter was nearer to Blackchester than Mistress Whitelamb could have dreamed.—Nay, she might absolutely have been down on the Lower Pavement ere her letter reached it, had it not been that when she approached Ostend, she had felt the necessity of rest,—owing, perhaps, to her having made acquaintance with a rather attractive person during the long, jolting railway day from Cologne to Ostend,—a gentleman going to alight at The Swan: a second-rate inn of that engaging and respectable town.

“I think, Colonel Vandaleur,” said the

Baroness, having got at his name,—“that when one is comfortable, one cannot be better than comfortable: and so I shall stay here for a week or two. Charlie wants sea-bathing sadly.”

The announcement was, possibly, less seductive to Colonel Vandaleur (there was a Miss Vandaleur into the bargain) than our Baroness may have hoped;—since, on the second day of her sojourn at The Swan, letters arrived calling the gentleman to the Hague.—Accordingly, the lady was left to wear out the fortnight for which she had contracted with the book-keeper of The Swan, without the solace of his grave and middle-aged but handsome presence. He had been much taken with the quickness and the brilliant eyes of the boy in the railway carriage.—Charles was, indeed, an engaging creature; had established himself at the Colonel’s side—had read a Greek motto off his seal-ring, and had sung a tune by Mozart and “Crambambuli,” as a clever child might do,—had mentioned the names of the towns as they passed (having seen pictures of their churches and spires),—and had

not shown himself greedy; since, on the Colonel giving him a peach, he had at once proffered half to a poor purple-faced mite of a girl who was going up to Brussels with her large, flabby parents.—There was his own elder brother unnoticed in the background. — But though Colonel Vandaleur may have been attracted by the boy, it may have occurred to him that a hasty, not to say a confidential intimacy with the boy's mother, was not, therefore, a matter of course.—Further, as has been told, Miss Vandaleur was with him—and the Widow was well preserved. There have been many women who have looked older at thirty,—perhaps there may have been one who may have looked younger at forty, than did the Baroness.

She *was* well preserved. Her hair was rich, and waved naturally; her teeth were untouched by Time; her figure was round and pliant. There was an unconquerable life of youth in her eyes; and her laugh (of which she was not sparing) was musical and, like her hair, natural. Her dress was odd—composed of a common merino suit

and an ermine tippet. It is grievous to say that the essentials were neither fine nor clean. She was more than a trifle tumbled—more than a little tawdry. Nevertheless, she had a pleasant face, and an intimate, yet not coarse, heartiness of manner, which some delayings and reserves might have improved.—No opportunity, however, was afforded her of further recommending herself. For a couple of hours she was disposed to bemoan herself, as though she had been deserted.—But it was her way to take her troubles lightly, or, rather, to transfer them to the first passer-by who would stop to inquire,—and then to run away from them. Who knew but that, since stay in Ostend for a fortnight to come she must—the grave and handsome Colonel being past recal—other seal-rings and peaches over which Charles might exhibit his learning and his gracious ways, might be found walking on the Dyke?—And it was not bad for her to have a little leisure to rummage out of that storehouse of flighty recollections and busy schemes—her memory—all that she had ever heard of Mistress Ga-

latea; the cousin at whose purse she was aiming herself and her two companions.—Being a sanguine woman, and adroit at multiplication, she quadrupled the good lady's income, and added a heap of money saved—"and for what earthly good?" That her cousin was a sweet-tempered and hospitable creature, was less apocryphal. Aunt Sarah Jane's daughter assumed that her relative was very old, and wanted some young life about her.

All these gatherings amounted to a trifle; though they were the result of many days of pondering (so far as the Baroness *could* ponder) on the Dyke. And she was left to her musings undisturbed, since no new person fell in her path with whom she felt it discreet to make acquaintance. She had learned, by dearly-bought experience, to be cold and reserved to the picaroon world—a rather large world, it is said, at Ostend.—But one of her two offsprings had *his* adventure on the Dyke, and this was not Charles—whom there is no need to announce as The Prodigy—but his elder brother.

A chasm of five years separated Charles from Justin. The latter was the hard bargain;—reputed to be slow at his books; and awkwardly grown.—Charles would make his brilliant way, as a matter of course. What she might do herself, who could tell? so ran the Widow's song;—but the hard bargain was to be handed over for good and all to Miss Galatea. “Those old maids are always so thankful for an object.”—So, behind the lady without an age, and the boy whose face beamed with every gracious affection and generous instinct, the youth was allowed to carry shawls, umbrellas, and waterproof clogs — sometimes a sandwich-basket, sometimes a disdained toy or book belonging to the Prodigy, on the Dyke at Ostend.

He was suddenly stopped there, one day, while thus occupied, by a woman full of fear, and haste, and anxiety,—a tall, grand-looking lady, handsomely attired. “There has been an accident,” said she, rapidly. “Some one has been half drowned out of a boat, and they are bringing him in. He is not quite dead yet. Never mind your mis-

tress. Give me those cloaks and everything else. Run into the town; you can run faster than I. There's a napoleon. Go to the Bath Hotel, fetch my servants—Countess Westwood's servants—and some wine. He may die if you don't make haste. Never mind your mistress."

"She is my *mother*," said Justin, quietly. "I don't want money, lady.—Mamma! I am going into the town for a moment!—Charlie, please to hold your own book." And, as the two turned, he was off like lightning.

The Baroness was shrewd enough to perceive at a glance that this lady was of a different species from *those* ladies who flaunted or flounced along the Dyke at Ostend.

"So glad that you have made use of my stupid boy, madame!—This is my other son. Can we do anything? Is there any serious accident? If there is, may I ask you" (approaching her close) "to speak low—my treasure is so sensitive. The worst sleeper in the world."

The Countess took small heed of the Baroness, and of her treasure,—or *if* impression was made, the same did not tempt her to reply. For murmuring some words, with the slightest possible recognition of the other speaker, she turned and sped back to meet the procession—now swelled into a little crowd, that was slowly bearing the rescued man towards them. Ere it reached the spot where the Widow and the Prodigy stood transfixed (the latter eager to run and see), up hurried Justin, panting;—and with him a panting man, and a panting maid;—and the Baroness could note that, for all their speed, the two were not every-day servants.—“Well,” said she, not very complacently, to Justin, who hung back from going further, “we can be quick enough when it suits us!—Where is she living? Somebody she is, evidently!—A real cache-mire! But who is she to make you run so fast? Who is she?”

“She is going to Holland to-morrow,” was the answer of the youth, as he wiped his grave face. “Her name is Westwood,—

Countess Westwood.”—He did not confide to his mother, that late in the evening he received a short note, and this was what it said.—“The poor man will not die. He proves to be an emigrant—on his way to join a party bound for America; and who has lost everything in the wreck.—Thank you for your help. I am going away to-morrow. Remember my name. I shall remember yours.

“ROSAMOND WESTWOOD.”

CHAPTER III.

THE BLUE KEYS.

FIVE days after the adventure just recorded, Mistress Whitelamb,—whose mind during the past week had been wandering in a maze of perplexities,—was called to order and instant action by a second letter. This was from London, and merely contained these words :

“ By your silence, dear Gatty, I conclude——”

(“ Who ever called me Gatty? Not Mr. Smalley, I know, during the first fifteen years I lived at the Waterworks.”)

“ — I conclude that our letters have crossed, and that you are expecting us.

Please, then, to send some vehicle the day after to-morrow to the railway station to meet the Stutchbury train, which gets to you at three.—We are a trio, as Charlie says, and a lot of luggage. I shall not hire a maid until I am settled.

“We are horribly fatigued by our passage from Ostend. Don’t you hate the sea?—It blew a gale. My angel fainted for seven hours. Put us up anywhere; only Charlie must be close to me, for he is but an indifferent sleeper when he is excited. *Auf Wiedersehn,*

“SYBIL EINSTERN.”

Here was a despatch little calculated to deliver Mistress Whitelamb from her perplexities. *What* was she to do?—They were all but come. The great escutcheon seal precluded any possibility of mistake, and those two last words put the coping-stone on her difficulty. If Mr. William Openshaw, who could read German, had been at home, indeed—but her maid had deposed to his having departed that very morning by the train to Stutchbury, with a portmanteau,

and two elderly Quakers, a male and a female.—And, O! if Mr. Smalley had but been alive!—One thing, however, it was inevitable she must do. They would want an early tea with meat; and, of course, she must ask them up to tea from the town.—So she put on her cooking apron, and stepping there and then into the nether regions of the house, of which the larder was never empty, addressed herself to the solemn manufacture of one of those redoubtable chicken-pies which had been famous in the happy days of the Waterworks. Therein at least laid welcome and safety.

But about “putting them up?”—The innocent woman never dreamed of Aunt Sarah Jane’s daughter and family invading her premises as guests, for two reasons—the first, because Mr. Smalley had never liked people sleeping in his house; the second, because she had only one tiny spare room never used.—*That* Mr. Openshaw had so many cousins!—So nothing was to be done but for her to set off at once for The Blue Keys; though, even to the inexperienced mind of Mistress Galatea, it presented itself

that a Baroness and The Blue Keys of Blackchester did not seem to agree. Perhaps, said fond Hope within her, "those last two strange foreign words at the end of the letter may mean—*To make the best of it*,—and she may have heard that Mrs. Meggley can partition a single gentleman's bedroom off the club-room."

The dinginess and stagnant trade of Blackchester were written in dull and fusty characters on every brick, board; piece of furniture, and animal belonging to its principal Family Hotel. Mrs. Meggley, the landlady, was still in a black crape cap and a black cloth gown, though Mr. Meggley had been gathered to his fathers from The Blue Keys eight years ago. No head waiter had been able to induce her to lay aside the suit of woe.—She was a respectable, fiery woman, with a bill like that of a flamingo in the centre of her face, and a succinct wig clamped to her head with black velvet ribbon: a hostess who kept rule and order over the "commercial gentlemen" as well as over her ostlers and postboys;—and who made it a virtuous point of never

serving any hot eatable or drinkable (save on club nights, or in the bar) after ten at night,—however weary the traveller might be.

Into The Blue Keys Mistress Whitelamb had never once intruded during the long years of her intimacy with Blackchester.—Mr. Smalley had not approved of ladies roving about in hotels, and had himself paid the few calls which it was civil to pay on their friends passing through who had halted there.—This, and Mistress Galatea's reputation as a cook who clung to receipts of her own, refusing to disseminate the same, made her by no means popular as a townswoman with mine hostess;—so that when the dear lady crept timidly into the dingy passage, closed by a dreary bar smelling of liquors and lemons, and asked to speak with Mrs. Meggley in a voice little louder than a whisper,—that offended woman, screened by a punch-bowl, made Mistress Galatea wait, and repeat her query twice, ere she condescended to come forth and frostily to inquire what might be the pleasure of her visitor.

“The pleasure——Do I speak to Mrs. Meggley?”

“My name’s Meggley, ma’am.”

“I wish to secure your best rooms, consisting of a sitting-room, that is—and three good bedrooms, for a lady who will arrive to-morrow from Stutchbury. Your hotel, I hope, is clean up-stairs?”

“Ask these gentlemen,” pointing to two youths striding noisily down the dingy staircase, with cigars in their mouths, “if they have anything to complain to the contrary;—and they know The Blue Keys better than some of our Blackchester people. Mr. Dowler, Mr. Tunbury, step this way, will you? Here’s a lady wishes you to give me a character.—Clean, truly!—and I, who have not had a bonnet on my head these six years!”

The gentlemen appealed to, though loud and coarse second-rate commercial travellers, did not mean to be rude. So, opening their mouths, not before Mistress Galatea’s curls were impregnated with “that horrid tobacco-smoke,”—one of the two assured the anxious lady that there might be light

cavalry in the beds (that there was in all inns), but no heavy black infantry, so far as he knew; and the other vouched for the house possessing a tap of "tip-top ale," and famous fried tripe once a week.—With that they went on their way noisily.

"You hear, ma'am," was the comment of the hostess. "Our best rooms, you said?—Our best rooms have been engaged these three weeks past for the Cattle Show: not that we are not always full. However, we can manage something—Thirty and Thirty-one—and can put up a partition in the club-room, and that's always free after twelve o'clock."

"I don't know,"—hesitated Miss Galatea.

"Well, we can't keep the rooms at such a busy time," responded the accommodating woman; "and I can't show you them now. There are people in bed in one, and a party having a snack in the other, and the third, as I said, we must manage somehow.—Shall I book them or not?"—and down came the book, and out came the pen from the black crockery inkstand.

"I suppose I cannot do better," said the

timid spinster, with a sigh not calculated to propitiate the dragon who kept *The Blue Keys*. “Baroness Einstern is the name.”

“Ironstone—very well. Baroness did you say, ma’am?”—the last words in a less unkindly tone.

“And you must be good enough to send a carriage to the Stutchbury station, to meet them at three o’clock,—and tell them, with my compliments, that I expect they will all tea with me at six, not later.”

“They’ll want some dinner first,” was the curt reply.—“Well, ma’am, it shall be done.—Tea with whom shall I say, ma’am?”

“Miss Galatea Whitelamb, their cousin, Number Seven, Lower Pavement.”

“O, I know—Mr. Smalley’s Miss Whitelamb!—Mr. Golightly,” raising her voice to meet a large third commercial traveller who darkened the passage,—“let that great big insufferable dog of yours pass through my house I will not.—Make him go round by the stable-yard. If you don’t like it, you had better put up at *The Owl*, and give up your bed.—Drive the dog out, George!—And Mr. Bower of Bower Mills unable to get by! Drive the dog out, I say! Permit

it I will not!—Now, miss, being busy, is there anything more you wish to order?—Mr. Bower, sir, they are dishing your dinner this very minute.—Anything more, miss?”

Nothing. Poor Mistress Whitelamb was too tremulously perplexed in considering how to pass George the Boots, and Mr. Golightly's familiar, a beast that barked furiously—not to speak of the redoubtable Mr. Bower of Bower Mills (as big as any Baron in his own conceit, and that of the neighbourhood), and too glad to slip by, to think of anything—or to recollect whether she had forgotten anything, till she was in the open air, out of Blackchester, and up on her own peaceful Lower Pavement. When there, she could not help anew pondering how far The Blue Keys might be fit for a Baroness, though the lordly manufacturer of Bower Mills did partake of its luxury and hospitality. The idea kept her awake the greater part of the night; and she arose a little after cock-crow, somewhat to tranquillise herself by whipping a cream—in case the travellers should like something cool after tea in the evening.

CHAPTER IV.

THE EXCITEMENTS OF AN ARRIVAL.

PROBABLY among all the ideas of a German Baroness, which have ever visited the head of one never having set eyes on so august a personage, who was troubled with curiosity on the subject—few have been wilder and more confused than those of Mistress Galatea. Visions of a coronet, a train, and a state chair covered with red velvet, such as she had seen in picture-books when a child, could not be altogether got rid of. After that most wakeful of nights in her experience,—and after the cream of hospitality had been whipped, they remained with

her during the whole morning. Towards noon another and a more personal question claimed its hearing :—Which gown, and which cap of hers, were fittest for the reception of a German Baroness ?

Interest in the arrival, however, was not confined to Mistress Galatea.—By one of those sagacious provisions so frequent in the early days of railway-making, the station for the line from Stutchbury was two miles beyond the turnpike just out of Blackchester.—There was small traffic that way, and a structure called an omnibus from The Blue Keys, little larger than a bathing-machine, was found sufficient to bring into the town the few passengers who were not disposed to walk, or who had no carriage to meet them.—Thus the little station-house, with its shed trellised with flowering shrubs, was generally left in a placid state of desertion. And thus—besides an open barouche which had known better days—to see a couple of walkers of substance moving thitherward at half-past two on a scorching day with a cold wind, was a rarity, if not an event.—

One of the two was the great Mr. Bower of Bower Mills—and the other, Mistress Galatea's busy neighbour, Joshua Openshaw.—The two recognised one another, not, it might have been thought, with any extraordinary cordiality.

“Thee sees, John Bower, that the want of rain has been universal. Cobbins's grass is very backward, for this month.—I expect fodder will be dear. Thee has many horses at Bower Mills?”

“Good day, Mr. Openshaw. Going to meet the train?”

“Thee art, I expect. It is seasonable weather for a journey, after the rain. Mostly, travelling in this month is trying, owing to the coal-dust on the road. I see the tree and the tower on that carriage” (this as the barouche took its place in waiting), “Thy arms, my son says, who is curious in heraldry ;—Thy carriage?”

“Once it was,” was the haughty reply, “till my coachman let The Blue Keys have it ; the springs were always so —— uncomfortable. And so *you* think Blackstone wants looking after? What made them build the

station in such a —— out-of-the-way hole as this? I'll be —— if I can tell;—and what made them pitch on that —— Blackstone for station-master? There he is, rubbing his —— spectacles as usual; just as if no train were coming in before midnight."

"Thee uses epithets which are hardly desirable," was the Friend's comment on the Bower expletives. As an honest man, he could not let them pass.—"Then I expect they have sent the carriage from The Blue Keys, in place of the omnibus, to meet somebody.—Thomas Blackstone, is thy time-book posted?"—and by this manœuvre the prudent Joshua made good his entrance to the platform without being under observation for inquisitiveness—on the whole, having got the start of the magnate manufacturer.

Mr. Bower, too, lounged through the office with ill humour on his face—got up, perhaps, to strike terror into Blackstone (a quondam butler) for his supineness in watching the iron road.

The train came in to its moment,—for a

wonder. Out of a first-class carriage emerged the unusual number of three passengers.—Friend Openshaw was in an instant aware that the compartment occupied by them had been as closely shut up as if it were “eleventh month,”—and that there came forth from it with the lady an overcoming breath of scent. He had not before seen the fashion of a veil tied under the chin, instead of a bonnet. He was aware of the cost of ermine, and so was alive to the stateliness of that adornment—more so than to the discrepancy of its being now worn together with tumbled Midsummer muslin. So intent was the observant Elder on these details, to be served up to his wife and to his daughter Susanna, at tea,—that he took small heed of the rosy boy in the black velvet coat, to whom the lady said, “Come, Charlie, out of this bitter draught, though it is July,”—as they vanished into the Bower vehicle; leaving the elder youth to his usual task, the duty of collecting the luggage.—Mr. Bower may have been more used to Brussels veils and ermine tippets than his fellow pilgrim in search of information, since,

besides noticing them, he could notice also the boy and the youth,—the practical yet not tardy thoughtfulness of the latter, and the unpretending shabbiness of his clothes. “If that’s her servant” (passed through his mind), “he is a fellow I should like well enough about me. Steady and quiet, and with a good headpiece. He has his eyes everywhere; and, of course, can write German. But what now? St. Brian’s bells?—Mr. Openshaw, what can those bells be ringing about?”

“Thee art aware, John Bower, that our society has no unity with bell-ringing. On fourth-day nights, when they perform in the church tower for the leg of pork, the din is disturbing, even up to where we live. And here is Ann Meggley’s omnibus, after all. I shall prefer riding back.”

And, with this, the gaiters of the long-legged and clean Quaker stepped up nimbly into the vehicle. The great Mr. Bower could not do better than follow his example, “having,” as he mumbled, “said what he wanted to that —— Blackstone.”—A third

passenger rode on the top of the carriage, among umbrellas, cloaks, and huge, murderous, iron-bound trunks ; — feeling, perhaps, as desolate and overborne as any German-born boy, for the first time entering such a dreary English provincial town as Blackchester, could feel.

CHAPTER V.

AN AFFECTIONATE COUSIN IN NEED.

MISTRESS GALATEA had waited tea for an hour and a half after six, before a carriage dashed up to the Lower Pavement with a false air of state and triumph rare in that suburb.—Out of the carriage tumbled (vulgar people might have said) the ermine tippet, the Brussels veil, the cheap and not clean summer gown, with a Baroness in the midst of them ;—and, before her, a beautiful rosy boy in a black velvet coat.

Ere the boy could get into the little parlour, he had noticed the stuffed bird of Paradise, arranged with dry grasses behind it,

in the passage. "Who stuffed that bird?" was his cry. "Mother, you remember the old woman's hat at Court at Dummberg. She had a bird and its tail in her hat, too.—Cousin Gatty, *who* stuffed that bird? It's better stuffed than the old woman's."

The kindly woman was won at once, and for ever, by the boy's question, and by his eager, lovely face,—and the two broke the shock of the Baroness, who had every conceivable thing to say and to protest as regarded her feelings on the occasion.—Mistress Galatea listened to the utmost of her power and comprehension;—while she managed to slip a tart (and a rare tart it was) into the hand of the Prodigy.

"Dying, my dear, to get to you have I been!" ran her relative's discourse. "When my Baron died—a release, indeed!—and when my mind turned homeward, I said to myself, if once, one thousand times, 'Why, there's my mother's niece, Cousin Galatea!'—Well, during all my trials, thank God I had comfort in *your* prosperity. I always looked to you! Circumstances have deferred our personal meeting till now; but

here we are ; and what a dear *you* are !”—And on this the cap of Mistress Galatea, built under provincial difficulties, with an eye to neatness, was approved enthusiastically, and with a kiss, by the foreign wearer of ermine, at least, if not a coronet.

“ Now, *do* you know,” went on the moss-trooping Baroness, “ I did not one bit fancy, before I came, that we should get on half as well as we do.—Such strange notions, one has, about England ! though it is my mother’s country.—We thought you might be so cold. (Is there any place where dear Charlie can go and play ?) We—— (Is there any place where dear Charlie can go and play ?) ”

Mistress Galatea’s first thought was the pantry ; her second, the flags of the Lower Pavement.—“ There’s nobody ever there, save one of a family of Quakers, at Number Two, a girl, and she is not there often. It’s safe.”

“ Then go out, Charlie, go to—Flags, is it?—while I talk to Cousin Gatty.” The command was a note too shrill ;—but the boy ran to obey it, possibly not displeased

to play on strange flags, in a strange open air.

“So charming to feel myself so completely at home!”—resumed the Baroness, with a bewildering amount of affection, volubility, and foreign accent. “I knew—and I said so to our friends the Vandaleurs—I was positive, that it would be all right when I once got to you. We were so sure to understand each other in an instant:—and we *do*, you dear!—and I shall not make the least of a stranger of you. You know I have no other relations to look to in England.”

“But why did not Master—your other son, I mean—cousin, come up to his tea?” was Mistress Whitelamb’s contribution to the dialogue.

“O, Justin; poor, good, useful, stupid fellow! He had to stay and unpack Charlie’s things, and to put our rooms to rights. So soon as you can ever receive us, I shall be delighted to leave that inn down yonder. The church bells will give one the horrors;—and the place is smoky, and the rooms

are small. She did, however, send up a good dinner,—a really good dinner, upon my honour, Gatty. Sea-fish, you know, is a treat to those who come from the interior of Germany. We half lived on it at Ostend. This fish, she said, came from London, and in the same train with us. Was it not thoughtful?”

“Mr. Bower cannot dine without his delicacies, they do say,” replied Miss Galatea—“and chooses to have his coffee made from some outlandish French machine, with no proper isinglass to clear it. Mr. Smalley *could*.—But those were good days, to be sure” (and here a little tear was dropped). —“I am sorry not to have seen Master Justin as well as Master Charles, cousin.”

“If he can get the head of the battle-axe out of the long trunk in time, he will come up in the carriage to fetch us, and to bring it you—one of the Einstern axes. There was an armoury in our old castle.—We *must* bring you *something* from Germany, Gatty dear.—And this is a genuine bit of the old times, one of the last of the relics

saved out of our break-up,"—and the Baroness did *her* little tear by way of enhancing the preciousness of the battle-axe.

"But, if I am not dreaming, cousin, there was something in your letter—Mr. Ogg read it—(Mr. Ogg is my trustee)—about one older than these two youths. I hope——"

"Don't name him, I beg and beseech you.—You will never see or hear of him. It is a sore subject. I cannot tell" (this was half aloud) "what in the world possessed me to mention it. I hope you have torn up my letter?"

"Not I, my dear; but Miss Ann Ogg did:—tore it up in a fit of absence, just when supper was coming in; and we wanted something to light the lamp with.—Her brother was much displeased, and said it was a real family document. But she is a good creature, though rather foolish and too inquisitive."

"Now about my splendid, gifted Charlie, Gatty dear! I only live to educate him, to see him take the place which his splendid genius entitles him to take. He *is* a wonder!—Fancy his puzzling our travelling com-

panion, Colonel Vandaleur, in Greek—positively in Greek—the other day, as we came down to Ostend. He notices everything. He enjoys everything, with the fresh heart of a child, though, God bless him! As to his music! Cherubini—*Che-ru-bi-ni*—my dear!—and you know he is an authority—said that he was a child beside Charlie, the other day, when they met on the frontier. Cherubini wanted to adopt him, but no, Gatty dear, no! I could not spare my Charlie—not even to Cherubini.”

“He is a lovely boy,” said Mistress White-lamb, from her heart.

“Well, you see, cousin, such being the case, till we ascertain what my property is to yield—what is left of it—on somebody I must rely. The one object I have in life is to see that Charlie is done justice to.—Genius like his must and shall have every advantage. So, as I said, I look to you. To whom else can I look? Two or three hundred pounds for the first year, every farthing of which I pledge myself to repay, must be made to do. And how good of you to contrive for us so very tolerably, till you can

take us in, at those Black and Blue Keys, so I call them already!—Don't I speak very decent English, Gatty dear, for a body with an Irish origin, and who was married when a baby to a being half an Austrian, half a Croat?"

Simplicity sometimes serves its owner as well as subtlety or spirit. Mistress White-lamb, over whom the threat of the Einstern battle-axe as a present had passed innocuously, and who had not appreciated that sharp and stern change of tone in the Baroness when a third brother was inquired for,—on such a direct attack being made against her purse, could think of no better diversion than handing across the whipped cream of the morning,—and of no answer more explicit than,—“Mr. Ogg, cousin—cousin, the Reverend Mr. Ogg—St. Brian's Church is close to The Blue Keys—a friend of Mr. Smalley's, cousin!—my trustee!—I hope you will find Mrs. Meggley's beds comfortable.”

The Baroness was disconcerted, feeling like one whose first advances had been too

confidential. Therefore, a coming question, intended to ascertain the precise amount of "dear Gatty's" income, was discreetly suppressed, and she fell back on the warmth of her maternal affections, and the marvels of graciousness and genius existing in her treasure.

"You hear how he speaks English, Gatty dear;—never heard it spoken, I give you my word, except by me: and could *I* teach any creature grammar?—And Charlie has taught, or as good as taught, Justin, who is naturally slow.—Why, and look at those little feet of his! How they manage at an organ, I cannot divine; and who taught him to play an organ at all, I can't tell. There was no organ at Castle Einstern. But when we were passing through Fulda—he's like quicksilver, and must put himself everywhere—while Justin and I were finishing our dinner, what did the darling do, but got into the church, got at the organ? And there he was astonishing everybody!—I shall never forget old Brummkerl's face, as he said, 'That is an angel, gracious madam,

not a child.' Brummkerl, you know, is at Fulda. He is taking the lead in Germany. —They want him for Berlin——”

“Fulda is in Germany,” was Mistress Whitelamb’s comment. “I am sure Mr. Ogg will be happy to allow him to try the organ at St. Brian’s. Once *we* could have accommodated him,”—and here she stopped, and twinkled away another fond little tear.

“He would give away the clothes from his back, Gatty dear! He *did* give one of my three last diamond pins (I have lost the other two) to a pretty little girl who travelled in our carriage a night and a day, coming down to Frankfort.—He’ll give your bird of Paradise to somebody unless you lock it up!—I shall be in a terror every hour at The Black Keys, yonder, because they say that people are so precise—stiff, call you it in England?—and the dear boy has never been checked.—Back again, Charlie? —Quite right it was not to stay out in the cold; for it *is* cold in England, Gatty dear;” and here happened a shrug under the ermine tippet.

“O, mamma,” cried the Prodigy, eagerly,

“such a curious girl there, dressed like a little grey nun, but with *such* a funny hat! She was so white, and as upright as *this*,”—and he stiffened himself into an attitude—“and she was walking backwards and forwards under the windows.”

“That prying Quaker’s child,” exclaimed Mistress Whitelamb, more quickly than she had yet spoken. “I hope she had not the curiosity to speak to you?”

“I spoke her, cousin Gatty,” was the answer ;—“a very nice, odd little girl.”

“Spoke *to* her, Charlie darling!” corrected the Prodigy’s parent. “And what did you say to her?”

“I said her, where she lived, and why she wore those funny clothes?—And then she said me, I was a stranger, was I?—And then I said her about our sailing over in the night, and the big, high water, and how sick I was at first, and how far away it seemed, and all the rushing noise, and how I thought the lighthouses were eyes on the shore, as we got near. And she said me (O, we grew great friends), ‘Didst not thou feel very near the Almighty?’—

and so somebody bobbed at some window, somewhere, and I gave her a kiss, and she went away into a house."

"Like that Susanna Openshaw!" observed Mistress Whitelamb. "They have assurance enough among them, sleek as they seem—the whole family. My dear, those Quakers can sit at their worship (as they call it) a couple of hours mum, without uttering a word. I went once. Mr. Smalley objected to my trying again, as if I could have wished for such a thing.—But mute as they are, they know everything that is going on. No doubt that child was sent out to pry."

CHAPTER VI.

THE GREAT MR. BOWER.

GREAT as was the great Mr. Bower of Bower Mills, he was greater in nothing than in his use, or reserve, of insight into characters and events as the same promised or passed.—The steps by which he had risen from the plight of a nameless foundling to that of a man of large substance and influence—a man marked out for a title, it was known—had most of them been taken after an instant's decision. If mistakes he had made, and if he had repented of them, he never owned as much. Partly from this very habit of self-reliance, it would not be easy to name a man so substantial and so

influential—not at heart perversely morose—actively moving among men, who was so utterly solitary as himself.

He was without family or kith and kin to lean on. This was almost unsuspected by persons the deepest in his intimacy. No one had ever traced his life further back than some five and twenty years (he was now fifty), before which date he had arrived as manager to Mr. Stone, of Bower Mills.—No one could precisely tell by what amount of unwearied labour, sagacity, and adroitness he had risen from being manager into a junior partner, and thence into a place in the old manufacturer's family.—Johanna Stone could be recollected as a pale, deformed, only child, with few advantages, and fewer attractions. He had married her or she had married him, who knew?—She had died without issue, within a month after her father's death. There was no will to dispute. There was nothing for Mr. Stone's nearest relations (two old shaky female cousins, who lived near Lockerby) to question. There could be no quarrelling, no cavilling, neither imputations nor indigna-

tions, simply because there had been no foul play nor false dealing. It has chanced, ere Mr. Bower was born, that other men have dropped into splendid positions of fortune mysteriously, precisely because there was no mystery in the matter.—“I do not belong to this part of England,” was all that Mr. Bower had been ever heard to say regarding his past when once questioned,—and he was a man whom it was not easy to question twice. His wife’s decease and his own accession to the Mills had been forgotten in the shire as accepted facts for some ten years or more ere he and Justin met at The Blue Keys, Blackchester.

Mr. Bower had too large and long an experience of young men not to be struck, as has been said, by the presence of mind, patience of temper, and steadiness of movement, shown by the neglected boy at the station.—But he was too discreet to remark on these to his more simple and garrulous companion in the omnibus; and the Friend was too much in awe of the rich man and of his swearing to enter into free talk. On alighting at The Blue Keys, the manu-

facturer and the family drudge were left to themselves :—for Joshua Openshaw had not on that particular day, as on some other days, “a word to drop with Ann Meggley.”

Mr. Bower was not inhuman so much as shrewd. When he allowed himself the intolerable habit of swearing (so, at least, he had said), it was to keep people at a distance.—He watched the weary boy gently before he addressed him ;—and sent to his aid one of the Bower Mill grooms (Mr. Bower travelled with two grooms). At length, when the hasped, and clasped, and padlocked arks of household stuff had elaborately vanished up the dark stairs of Mrs. Meggley’s inn—Mrs. Meggley curtsying to every trunk as it passed, and very low to the black box with the coronet.—“You are tired, my man,” said the manufacturer to the youth. “Come over into my room and have a glass of good German wine. I always bring my own wine with me to this sort of place.”

If the truth is to be told, Justin’s hungry thoughts were just then running on roast

hare with plum jelly,—and at best he was unready in conversation; but he followed his inviter civilly, glad for the moment to be invited to anything better than seeing after those huge boxes—and aware, from the experience of years, that no provision would be made for his comfort by their proprietor.

“How long have you lived with your mistress,” was the close question, as the German wine was poured out by the great Mr. Bower. “But by —— he is as white as a ghost!—Something to eat!” and here was given to the bell a John Bull’s pull, as violent as the historical summons in Cock Robin.—“Let me have what I want immediately, waiter; the best you have ready.”

“I am no servant, this once again,” said the German boy, speaking English slowly, and in a rather sad tone. “I have no mistress;—because she is my mother—Baroness Einstern——”

“His mother!” was Mr. Bower’s stage *aside*,—in accompaniment to the entrance

of cold meat and greengage-tart, with their due appliances, which answered the magical call of the great man of Bower Mills.

Justin brightened up; though yearning for roast hare with apricots, and all manner of German abominations. He was jaded that night,—worn out as people feel at the end of a strange journey, and more than usually alive, therefore, to neglect or to comfort. Hence, being encouraged by the generous meat and wine, during the half hour of his meal, he imparted to the great Mr. Bower of Bower Mills a good part of the family story which has been already told;—dwelling, with the pleasure of a sound heart and the eloquence of a sincere tongue, on the variety, and promise, and genius of Charles. “O, sir, I could work for him! I have worked for him! I could die for my brother! He has been already talked of all over Germany as a Prodigy.”

“Umph!” was the practical answer, not ill-naturedly toned. “But a man can’t die for anybody else unless he has some life to give away;—and you look dead beat! Take

another pull at that green bottle, and there's a good wing yet left on the chicken.—So the boy's a Prodigy? What sort of a Prodigy?"

Then came—though Justin availed himself the while of the hock and the chicken, a loving detail of everything hopeful to hear—pleasant to tell. "My brother knows everything, gentleman, already, better than you or I do—but he is most for music."

Mr. Bower was among our first manufacturing princes, who had established a band in his works at Bower Mills, and had given instruments and opened the lists of competition for prizes. "Umph!" he said again—that was all.

"You should hear him play the violin, gentleman; he wanted to teach me. But he can never teach anybody anything."

"Teach! how old is he? My boy, you had better go to bed at once and get a sleep, for you are dead beat, I say. I hope your brother won't play his —— violin here."

Justin did not heed the epithet, for he

was finishing the second wing of that chicken and the wine in the green glass ; —and he was sleepy.

He had sunk to dreamless rest after his hard day, in the corner screened off from the club-room, fœtid with tobacco (a domestic smell for Justin), ere Mr. Bower's discarded barouche amused the market-place and the last loiterers on the wall of St. Brian's Church by yielding up to The Blue Keys the lady in ermine and the boy in the velvet coat.—She was thoughtful, if not uneasy ; not quite so sure that her sword could open the oyster on which she was resolute to subsist, as she had intended to be, when she had set out to embrace her strange, rich cousin. Further, she was not too well satisfied in regard to the contents of that oyster's shell.

The Prodigy was all talk, and spirits, and curiosity. "The organ in the church there, he was sure, had no pedals, or if it had, the player did not know how to use them. Justin should get him the keys of the church the very first thing in the morning —and he would see."

The careless half curtsey swept by the Baroness at Mr. Bower, who stood aside in the portico to make way for the comers, was not lost on the great man.

"I shall make out as much as I want to know," he muttered to himself, "before these Caldermere papers are signed. That is a woman who has seen the world."

"Who is that large man?" was the lady's languid inquiry, as she circuited Mrs. Meggley's civilities, mounting the stairs rather wearily.

"O, ma'am, that's the great Mr. Bower of Bower Mills, who is to go to Parliament for us, and to have a title, on Tuesday;—and who has given one hundred and eighty thousand pounds for the Caldermere estate, over there by Slopton. You can see the woods from the railway."

CHAPTER VII.

THE DOMAIN OF CALDERMERE.

THE woods of Caldermere were very old. There was a circular grove of dwarf twisted oaks, with a patch of virgin turf in the midst, which all the shire knew was as ancient as the Druid times. The knolls were thickly covered with younger trees than these, which were killing one another, said the woodsmen, for want of thinning; and the house—or what remained of the house, rather—was leaned against, and elbowed, and overshadowed by lofty elms.—A cedar on the rank lawn pushed its harsh witch-like arms within a few feet of the windows. Nobody, in brief, had cared to

improve or waste the property for many years—some said as many as ninety. The last possessor had been a bedridden invalid ; his heir was a distant cousin, who by debt, disorder, and difficulty, had been compelled to part with the old family acres and the few rooms of the old house, in preference to bringing the one into culture and to building up the other, which a conflagration had long years earlier reduced to its present melancholy plight of what is called “a wing,”—in this case a few worn-out rooms of an inconvenient mansion.

But Caldermere was the very estate of estates ;—the very place of places to suit Mr. Bower.—He jumped at a conclusion, in the case of purchasing the estate, as he had done, fortunately, in many other marking transactions of his earlier life.—He could afford to buy. He had no objection to let this be seen—though he had too much strong stern sense, and self-knowledge to parade it. It would be no bad step in his career to break the spell, and bring Caldermere back into its ancient county importance. There was no predecessor

whose popularity or consequence could put him at a disadvantage. The estate was capable of any amount of improvement. There was an admirable piece of high ground, on which could be built a palace, from the topmost tower of which, it was possible that the smoke from the tall chimney at Bower Mills might be seen in fair weather. What a home, he may have thought within himself, for a man who had entered life as a factory boy!—it being one of the secrets of his good fortune that he was still as keenly alive to his prosperity as he had been on the first day when his shoes kept out rain, and his coat was not disgraced by patches.

“There is no end to the capabilities of this place,” was his remark to the man of business at his elbow, “wilderness as it seems just now. But every third tree must come down, and I will have the lake drained, and the house——Well, say half a dozen years for the new house. With plenty of men, six years should be enough.”

“And of course, sir,” was the reply of a subordinate who thought he was playing

up to his employer, "when we begin to get matters into order, a stop will be put to this sort of thing,"—*this sort of thing* being a distant heap of gay-coloured spots on the turf, grouped round a spring of water, over which an old shed, as ancient as George the Second's time, was tumbling to pieces.

"O! Blackchester people coming into the park, you mean? Not on any account. Round the new house the gardens will be kept private, of course; but I'm not going to quarrel with my new neighbours. There's some one singing—a girl.—No, it is a boy's voice!—Absolutely that endless creature from The Blue Keys!—Well, it is a less nuisance in the open air; but——go to the house, Hicks: and tell them to open the parlour windows."—And the great Mr. Bower took the direction of the singing, and the gay spots on the grass.—There were two grave ones among them: a little slate-coloured girl, and a youth who somehow could never have looked bright had he been clad in scarlet. There were, besides these two, a lady in a rich Indian shawl,—a cool, pleasant-faced woman, past middle

age, in the cleanest of green muslins,—and a boy, with a cheek like a peach for colour, who had stuck a sheaf of harebells and one-half of a pheasant's tail into his cap, and who was singing up to the boughs with the impulse and instinct of one unable to restrain his pleasure in so sweet an afternoon scene.

The boy had insisted—and he always got his own way—on the little Quaker girl being fetched to go with them to Caldermere. Mistress Galatea had been only once there before—years ago, when Mr. Smalley had, by permission, caught a perch in the lake. “But as we have the carriage, Gatty dear, why not use it?” had said the Baroness, who was resolute in not letting either “Gatty dear” or the carriage slip through her fingers,—and by whom the well in the park of Caldermere could be, for half a dull day, accepted as substitute for the well at the Spa of Blackchester—where well was none—and the more willingly, seeing that Mistress Whitelamb, to whom a twelve miles' drive was a serious journey and a memorable adventure, had

victualled the expedition with provisions,—infinitely more succulent as fare than any that The Blue Keys could yield. Justin, of course, had the charge of these; though him the spinster secretly mistrusted, ever after she had heard the youth expatiate on a carp with elderberry sauce, such as was to be eaten on the Danube. And, while she sat on her cushion on the grass, cramped enough, she never took her eyes from the hamper,—feeling that *her* business for that summer day was to prevent the insinuation of German messes into her good wholesome English cookery.

Straight up to this gathering walked the new proprietor of Caldermere.—“The great Mr. Bower, dear,” whispered Mistress White-lamb, turning red as she told the astounding fact.

“I think I see the Baroness,” said the gentleman, with a plain cordiality which was becoming. “If my friend here” (laying his hand on Justin’s shoulder) “had told me you were coming out, I would have received you better;—since that this is now virtually *My* place. Surely, if you

are going to eat luncheon, you would eat it more comfortably in the house than on the grass. The rooms are wretched and dreary enough at present; but wet turf, I take leave to think, is not so satisfactory as a chair and a table.—Here, child” (to the Prodigy), “you shall be useful for once. Come, carry the basket.”

“Please let me help,” said the small Quaker maid, as they all rose.

“Not you, little body,” was the quick answer. “And as for you” (to Justin), “you slave hard enough every day of your life, and shall have a holiday for once. I’ll make Hicks send for the basket, then;—if the youngster is too fine to bring it along. Bring the old lady, my friend. Who?”—(in the ear of the Baroness)—“O, Miss Whitelamb!—I am glad to see you at Caldermere, though I have no cowslip wine to offer you. I have heard of yours.”

“But I am not glad to see you!”—broke out the Prodigy. “And why go we into the house? and why stop you my violin early mornings? and why take you with you Mamma? and why make you me

carry something?—Susanna shall come with me. Let us run, pretty girl.”

“I expect I could carry thee, if thou wert tired,” said the small Quaker maid; “but I do not incline to run at present.”

It may have been that the Prodigy’s outbreak had passed unheard. The procession, as marshalled by one used to command, toiled up to what was left of the Old House of Caldermere, Mistress Whitelamb’s mind having been deposited with the viands on the grass.—It was merely, as has been said, the wing of an old great house, consisting below stairs of a waste hall,—a room or two, an awkward temporary kitchen and offices patched on a passage that ran behind both, broken by two or three shallow steps in more than one place. A modern door had been pierced into the gravel walk;—and over the door a porch, more modern in style still, had been built up shortly after the fire.

“Next to a ruin, you see, Baroness,” said Mr. Bower. “Up-stairs, less accommodation still: but here,” opening a door into

a faded parlour, "you will find tables and chairs ;—and as I dine here when I come, you will have plates, and knives and forks, and some one to wait on you, and" (to Mistress Whitelamb) "something better than sitting on damp grass."

"I hope my basket, sir, is safe," said the good woman.

"To be sure," was the answer. "I know it by reputation. If there was such a thing as true English hospitality, there were good doings at the Waterworks."

"But here is bad doings," cut in the voice of a restless creature.—"A room old, wet, dark.—Is that a piano in the corner? no, something like what you call English coffin—bier,"—and the Prodigy flew back from the sideboard, thus mistaken. "Why stay we here? It is all so dull."

Mr. Bower's eye caught the boy :—but Hicks, just then, came in with the basket, and with him his familiars to wait and assist :—and so, in course of the impromptu meal, the impertinences of the Prodigy were hushed down by his mother. — But the Prodigy, in preference to sitting beside her,

chose to have next him the little Quaker girl.

It was her small voice that first broke the silence, or rather the whisper of the meal, by saying,

“Please, which is the door?”

“Which door? What door?” answered, not impatiently, the great Mr. Bower, who never missed a voice that spoke.

“The door,” replied the girl’s voice, composedly, “at which the Face looks in.”

“Which Face? What Face?”—came the answer, a trifle more impatiently.

The Prodigy cried, “Tell, Susanna, tell—tell Face, and tell door.”

“The Face of Caldermere. When the decease of one in the house, or any trouble, is at hand, the Face looks in at some door in the dusk of the evening. Annabella Sterry knows a nurse who waited on the former proprietor, and who has seen it, shortly before his decease.”

“And what was it like, Susanna?” cried the boy, foremost again. “Was it a real ghost?”

“I expect so.”

“Mr. Smalley had heard of it,” remarked Miss Galatea, looking uneasily over her shoulder, “but forbade it to be mentioned: and would not let me speak of it even to Mr. Ogg.—I did not know, Miss Openshaw, that persons of your persuasion believed in anything.”

“Well, I did not know that I was going to buy a ghost among the other good things of this fine old property,” said Mr. Bower, “but it makes the purchase complete.—If I leave this wing standing, and I rather think of doing so—a connexion of my late wife’s may occupy it—I dare say we shall see or hear something, or nothing, more about the matter, all in due time.—Baroness, you must have seen ghosts enough in Germany.—Boy,” to the Prodigy, “I spoke to your mother, not to you.”

“Charlie dear, we shall be going directly. Why no, Mr. Bower, I was unlucky—Ghosts?—Hear of such things I did, it is true; and in Schloss Einstern (where your battle-axe came from, Gatty love) there was room for a regiment, but I was always too early, or too late for them, or they for

me. Perhaps we might not have agreed, if we had met."—She cut some further words short; contented with her success in making an answer which could tread on no one's prejudices.

Her adroitness was not lost on the great Mr. Bower. That was one of her "*eight-and-twenty*" afternoons, — or it might have been the sun striking through a pane of tinted glass, which freshened her cheek. She walked, too, lightly and gracefully; as might be seen when she was shown through what other portions of the Old House of Caldermere remained.—That happened to be one of the "terrible" afternoons of the Prodigy; and it was only by a blessed chance that Justin held him back from an affront to the great Mr. Bower's coat-tails. The will of the intercepted deed might have been seen, had not the mirror before which it took place been so dark and damp. To vent his disappointment, the urchin began to sing violently. The shrill voice rang through the Old House;—so that a little dialogue between the new possessor of it and the Baroness passed unheard.

“Please, Galatea Whitelamb,” said Susanna, “unless inquired of, do not mention to my mother that music was made. It is contrary to Friends’ principles.”

“What,—to believe in birds?” cried the terrible child, heedless of his mother’s injunction to “bid Mr. Bower good-bye” as he jumped into the barouche.

The master of Caldermere looked after them as they drove away, with a sagacious smile, and a mute gesture of observation on the part of his head.—He was closeted for two whole hours that evening with Mr. Ogg, Mistress Galatea Whitelamb’s trustee.

CHAPTER VIII.

A THIRD BROTHER.

THE bewilderment and occupation into which Mistress Whitelamb had been thrown by the events of the past seven days, are past description.—Three new persons forced into her intimate life ! her being brought face to face with the proprietor of Bower Mills ; —the manner in which “those Quakers” (so she put it to herself) “had thrust that strange sly girl of theirs upon them all,” were topics which would have lasted her for any given year, at her usual allowance of marvels. — But wonder the fourth and greatest of all, was the rapidity with which the Prodigy had twined himself round her

heart.—The dear woman comprehended but imperfectly her newly-found relations. Justin was an object of observant displeasure :—his last offence having been a eulogy of beer soup, which had nearly made her sick. She had never got rid of her coronet and ermine fears of Aunt Sarah Jane's daughter ;—but the boy, though he had life and spirits enough to turn the entire Lower Pavement upside down — though he openly cut apples into shapes, and called the hideous things so carved Gatty Whitelamb ; — though he startled her by breaking out in the Hunters' Chorus close to her ear, when she was deep in her culinary premises, over a pan of preserves ;—though he put wormwood into the teapot when Mr. Ogg was expected ;—and though when Mr. Ogg came, the great Mr. Bower came with him, to the utter surprise of the Lower Pavement, and though Mr. Bower was the first who found the wormwood in the tea, to Charlie's infinite delight—Mistress Galatea, I say, took a fancy to the Prodigy, not to be described. His defiance of her ways—his impudent trust in her good nature, the sound of his ceaseless

voice in the house, crying, "Where's good old Gatty?" and his assurance that she was pleased by his disturbances, opened the heart of the old maid. She hardly had time tenderly to think that Mr. Smalley would have kept him in order a little, and *not* have allowed him to drop bits of a cinder down the old sexton's back, on the second day when he went to play on that "stupid rattling old organ" (he called it) at St. Brian's.

The extent to which the great Mr. Bower disapproved of such an inmate at The Blue Keys, was not yet revealed—for Mr. Bower chanced to stay longer there than he had calculated; not only in respect of the arrangement of Caldermere title-deeds, but to meet his own architect from London,—one Mr. Quillsey.

That captivating person arrived with designs, showy, impossible, and utterly out of all rhyme and reason as to expense, for the new house. Thus Mr. Quillsey had to be checked and cut down: for the great Mr. Bower knew by heart what was practicable in engineering;—what labour costs—the

prices of wood, and the prices of stone ; and what “those painters” would require if their ideas were to be “carried out.” “Nonsense, Mr. Quillsey, and take your glass of wine,” he would say, as the two sat quiet at table (Charles, being out of the way, serenading the little Quaker girl on the Lower Pavement, with “*Deh vieni alla finestra*” on his violin). “Nonsense, Mr. Quillsey! — Oak panelling and frescoes on the back stairs, —so much outright waste ! Back stairs should have cool, strong walls, that can easily be cleaned. There are state rooms, and there are small ones. Nonsense ! I won’t hear of your medallions !”

“Merely medallions of game, sir,” broke in the projector ;—“let me show you a design.”

“No, thank you, Mr. Quillsey. And then —as to the organ-gallery in the hall, what in the world would be the good of such a thing without an organ ?—Music in my own house ?—I would as soon harbour a pestilence.—Am I not annoyed enough at The Blue Keys ?—Take away your organ-gallery. There is to be none at Caldermere.”

The root and branch revision of Mr. Quillsey's plans was not a matter to be completed in a day ;—and, as (perhaps) it suited Mr. Bower to be near the newly-purchased ground for “measurements,”—in Blackchester he stayed, until all Blackchester was nearly wild with tales of what was projected for the grand new mansion at Caldermere. “Her Majesty,” said Mistress Galatea, humbled to the dust by the wormwood in her teapot, on the occasion of that awful visit, “will hardly exceed your castle, sir, if what we hear is true.—But my little friend here will be sorry to hear you decline an organ—as we were informed when we went to buy music at Dodd's.”

“Go out, boy—and play—and don't listen—and don't do any more mischief, and don't, if you can, make any scraping on your fiddle for half an hour. We want to speak to Miss Whitelamb, and must not be disturbed by you.”

Mr. Bower was only so abrupt when he was in earnest ;—and so Charlie was sent out ; and in two minutes more might be heard, what Mistress Galatea called “per-

forming poultry and canary-birds," under the Openshaws' window.

"Where is the third and eldest brother of that intolerable boy?—the present Baron, I suppose, as Justin does not bear the title,"—was Mr. Bower's awful question to Mistress Galatea. "What age is he? What is he? Where is he? I should particularly be obliged to you, if you could tell me about him."

The good woman was sent to sea on the spot, by that sharp question. She recollected—she thought—no, she had never heard—then she was sure—then she trickled down into saying, "Charlie would tell us—Charlie would be the best person to ask."

A shrug from the great Mr. Bower (he never swore in a woman's presence) made reply to this lucid suggestion. He then said, "Would he? Justin cannot tell me anything about the matter."

"O, Master Justin, he may take what steps he pleases. I cannot answer for what he can tell; for I hear up from The Blue Keys, that he has been troublesome there, about eels, and a potato salad. A mess."

“ Ay, and about The Blue Keys let us have a word,” said Mr. Bower. “ Can you tell me ? I am afraid my friend Mrs. Meggley, when there is no one to check her accounts (I always do), is what some of those London wits said of somebody : a bird with a long bill—Hood, I think it was—about Sir Andrew Agnew.—Had not somebody better put some limit somewhere ? ”

This was Greek to Mistress Galatea, so she sat still, and referred herself to Mr. Ogg as her trustee. “ Mr. Ogg, dear sir——”

Mr. Ogg was good, he was upright—he was worn with provincial preaching, worn by the needs of a large family—seeing that St. Brian’s produced him only some two hundred a year ; nevertheless, he was one of those good men, truthful as daylight, honourable to the extent of their capacity, on whom, as a large class (God be thanked !), be their calling what it may, be their knowledge what it can be, be their prejudice what it ought not to be, the best interests of this small island repose as on a rock.

Mr. Ogg was in great fear of the great Mr. Bower, and so had some difficulty in

responding to such appeal. "But, Mrs. Whitelamb, Mrs. Meggley can't look to you for your cousin the Baroness Einstern's expenses: because she is running up matters very fast.—Post horses every day, and the driver; thirty shillings whenever they are taken out. And she sends for all manner of things from London for the table, and charges London prices, and her own percentage to boot. Mrs. Meggley can't look to *you*."

"Mr. Ogg,—dear sir,"—was the coherent answer,—“I shall propose to you to intercede then—and might I not offer you, and to you, Mr. Bower, sir, if I might take the liberty, some of my fresh cowslip wine?” and the action followed the word.

Mr. Bower sipped the small drink, having noted all that had passed. “But this has nothing to do with the question of the other son,” was his remark, when he put down his glass; “of the elder brother to these boys—Was there not one? I want to hear about him.”

“True,” was Mr. Ogg's reply; “but you

see, Mistress Whitelamb has nothing to say, because she knows nothing."

"I see," was the answer, "and I *know* that I will consult the Baroness herself, if I should want further information."

"But," faltered the good creature of the Lower Pavement, "Mrs. Meggley must not lose by me, though she may not look to me, —Mr. Ogg, dear sir—you know!"

Mr. Ogg was quenched, there and then, by Mr. Bower; which great man said, "Dear Mistress Whitelamb, never do you mind about The Blue Keys;—I shall talk to Madame Einstern herself about the other affair. Thank you, no more cowslip wine. Good evening."

CHAPTER IX.

RELIEF AND BRIGHT PROSPECTS.

WHETHER Aunt Sarah Jane's daughter, the Baroness, had not the most remote, or had the most precise, idea of what might be drawing on in respect to her future,—she comported herself in a manner calculated to do her tact the highest credit,—during many days—at all events. After the receipt of a letter from Germany, which was as large as a small quarto, supposing the same plastered with a red crown piece, she was closely shut up in her fusty parlour at The Blue Keys,—sent messages by the Prodigy in place of herself going to “Gatty dear,”—took the air on foot in the evening, leaning

on Justin, beneath a veil as noticeable in Blackchester as the ermine tippet had been,—and when Mr. Ogg pressed her, so far as Mr. Ogg could press her, for a conference of “half an hour,” begged to be excused for a week or so. “She had been shaken by news from Germany.”—Thrice she had passed the owner of Caldermere in the passage, with as little recognition as though he had been Mr. Dowler, or Mr. Tunbury, or that Mr. Golightly, who owned the disrespectful dog so unpleasant to Mrs. Meggley.

But, in truth, so far as the Baroness can be answered for, the dream of a new great marriage had not as yet presented itself to her in this quarter. She had been troubled with fancies as to what Mistress Whitelamb was, or was not, going to do for them:—how and where she was to get away and to rid herself of Justin, and to enjoy the blossoming of the Prodigy’s genius, clearly in bud,—before she was struck down by that square letter, with a blow; in the surprise of which were many sensations combined.

The letter contained final relief from gnawing apprehension. It brought, too, a

return to those fond early memories, which none, save the heartless, part from till Death wraps them in the shroud. A huge fear ceased to hang over her;—but O! how wrong, how weak, how selfish she had been; how secret with the child of her love, and the child who had made her respect him!—Sudden death seems to many thoughtful persons a blessed, desirable, escape; except it devastate a happy home-circle.—On the giddy, and the inconsequent—on those who float down the current as if there were no ocean to receive the stream, it strikes a dread as terrible as is the superstitious horror of savages when they first hear a gun fired. The Baroness had received from Vienna an official notification of a sudden death;—which news, for the moment, drove everything else out of her mind.

This catastrophe cleared her way in many directions. The drowned man in the Danube, for whose murder, by some unknown miscreants, her correspondent from the Austrian Chancellory vouched on the part of the police,—had long been to her a dreary trouble,—a creature to be shut out of her

sight ;—a foe who had traversed her married life,—who had appeared like a spectre in the midst of her most easy hours of festival,—who had claimed everything, drained every one, lied everywhere, and returned for ever and again. Older than Justin and Charles by many a year, he had served in an Austrian regiment. He had not, since his brothers had been born, lived at home, owing to disagreements there betwixt himself and his father.—On the decease of the latter, and the breaking up of the family, he had been written to, but had returned no answer.—Doubtless he had been in deep, strangling difficulty ; in doubtful company, it was certain ; and the result was that official report written from Vienna on the quarto sheet, with its orb of a seal, which had been for some weeks in quest of the Baroness. This so moved and appalled her, that she sat at home for one day in hysterics,—for two and three days in tears,—for a fourth day, of willingness to take the air in a thick veil,—and that during those five days no one, whether the nearest to her love, or the shrewdest in spying her proceed-

ings, could have divined what was her great preoccupation. She did not give it out as a sorrow. She was shaken (to use her own word), bewildered;—and though impulsive, she was too prudent to confide in any one, —because she was hardly able to put her thoughts into order, or clearly to perceive to what degree the relief would influence her coming life.

Before this disturbing news had reached her, she had drawn close to her cousin, Mistress Galatea, in more ways than one. Mr. Ogg had signified to her that she was to ask no questions as to the silencing of inquiries which Mrs. Meggley had begun to ask. Then, “I am desired to request,” were his words to the dragon of The Blue Keys, “that you will not utter a syllable on the subject to Mrs. Whitelamb.”—How could the Baroness be otherwise than thankful and tearful; and be willing to go to tea twice, where she had gone once reluctantly, in order to make her grateful sentiments mutely understood?—Further, the Prodigy and The Blue Keys did not agree. He seemed to find some impish necessity of provoking the great

man of Bower Mills.—He had penetrated into Mr. Bower's awful sleeping chamber:—and had spent a wet afternoon there in sewing pocket-handkerchiefs together, shredding thistles into boots, and judiciously arranging chocolate beetles in the great man's bed so as to excite disgust.—It was hoped that the author of these and similar malpractices was not discovered; but the Baroness knew him—and as it was found that the sprite was willing to go up and practise his violin on the Lower Pavement, the violin-case disappeared from the inn, and with it its owner, from morning till nightfall. Cousin Gatty pronounced the boy charming company, and sat stitching at a cushion for that violin-case, made out of one of Mr. Smalley's satin waistcoats.

“Drat the boy!—how could I say such a vulgar word?—bless him, I mean!”—was her joyous cry to the Baroness, at one of the tea-drinkings,—for she laughed till she cried, and could hardly tell it—“Do you know, cousin, he absolutely stole the bow from the back of my cap, while I was nodding after dinner yesterday, and popped it in—you

cannot think how cleverly—under the—lid—of—the plum—tart! He did! he did!—And” (with a chuckle of yet more exquisite enjoyment) “he taxed Grace with doing it—he did! Drat the boy!—I mean, bless him!

“There was never anything like him,” Mistress Galatea purred on, “for company! Mrs. Toplis,—the milkwoman, you know,—declares she can’t get past the house for his sayings. He stuck the bunch of quaking-grass, which used to be *there*,” pointing with her hand to the head of an eagle with a ball in its mouth over a mirror, “into the Blissetts’ can, one morning, he did!—And talking of quaking reminds me of Quakers. No; as to the Openshaws But they are all prim alike, and purse up their mouths; and so they pretend they don’t delight in him; and yet this very instant I hear Susanna’s voice—that fixture of a child! Just listen to the two, romping.”

So Charles, by unexplained consent, thus drafted up to the Lower Pavement, was not near his mother, when, one dull afternoon,

Mr. Bower came in to pay a visit (of late not an unusual thing)—this time to inquire if she had an hour disengaged ;—because, if so, he had something to consult her about which concerned her sons.

“Not a stratagem to take up your time, I assure you, dear madam,” continued the great Mr. Bower, as he sat down. “What I have to tell you does concern them ; because, principally, it concerns you.”

The Baroness behaved beautifully, and did not look surprised or fluttered. She had been grave for some few days past.

“You must allow me,” the gentleman went on, “to put, in as few words as possible, what I have to say—and not to think me disrespectful in so doing.”

Silence—a bow—not the least change of colour.

“You are possibly aware—if not, let me make you aware—that I am of *no* extraction ;—that I have not a relation in the world of whom I know.—You are possibly aware, too, that I have succeeded in life, and, in fact, that my present position implies

a title three weeks hence. I desire, and I mean, to marry."

On this, of course, the Baroness had nothing to observe.

"I *could* marry," resumed her visitor, "into a great family, I doubt not, if I wished—but I do not.—It would not suit me to stand at any disadvantage with any relatives or connexions, or otherwise to be controlled or hampered in my views and proceedings for the future. It would not suit me to marry a child without sense—a mere beauty."

"Sir!"

"Neither have I any vocation, or time, for educating a wife. That always answers badly. I have sought for an intelligent, agreeable woman, not so much younger than myself as to make our appearance together ridiculous—a woman used to the world of good society, with no ties save such as can be easily accommodated and provided for—a woman who would not expect false protestations of love, which, at my age—well, let that pass but who would

be satisfied with respect, consideration, and confidence. It strikes me that I have met with such a woman, and that I am talking to her now. How does it strike you?"

"I should say, Mr. Bower," replied the Baroness, after a little (not too much) agitation, and a pause (not too long), "that what you—what you speak of is so unexpected, so totally I feel your compliment profoundly, sir. My position *is*, as you say, one nearly as exceptional and solitary as yours. —But what *can* I say more? And my spirits have been severely shaken within these few days;" on which but the hysteric sob *did not* come, and Mr. Bower appreciated the seeming self-control. The frankness, ease, and not too much sensibility of the Widow's manner pleased him thoroughly; and as he considered her he saw in her face the faded young woman—not faded beyond the power of prosperity to revive the youth.

But Mr. Bower was no man of innuendo:—neither disposed to be kept waiting when once he saw his way clear. "What can you say?" was his answer.—"Say at once that

the proposition is not disagreeable to you, and myself as little ; or either say at once that it presents so many matters to be weighed, so many ideas which unsettle you, or which stand in the way of future prospects and hopes, that you will put it aside. In the latter case, however, I shall content myself with saying good-bye, with all good wishes."

"O, mamma ! mamma !" burst in a voice from the door, "I have been filling that old Mrs. Openshaw's bonnet with beans. She forbid the little girl to open her mouth all day, because I taught her 'Lieber Augustin.' How they came rattling down !"

"Charlie dear, go ; we don't want you just now. Go and play !"

"Play ! what shall I play on ? My violin is up there :—and the organ I can't get at, except once a week, and then I have to go and ask Miss Ann Ogg for the keys—like one of the Owl's daughters in the fairy tale, she is.—Where shall I play ? Where I choose. I shall stop and play here !"—and with this the imp flung dangerous looks

round him behind the back of the great Mr. Bower—which, for the instant, were disconcerting enough.

But the Baroness was relieved from her perplexity by the rising from his chair of the great man, who said, as he rose, neither coldly nor warmly,—“You will tell me how it strikes you when I call to-morrow. Child, good-day.”

“O, Charlie!” cried the Widow, in a sharper key than she had till then ever used in talk with her darling—“why would you break in on Mr. Bower;—just as if you wanted to make enemies?”

“Enemies!—I hate him! I hate him!” exclaimed the boy, red with passion, and stamping furiously on the ground, “and I want him to know it, and I want him to let us alone! Dear old Gatty says he reminds her of a tinker who used to mend Mr. Smalley’s kettles, he’s so like him.”—Dear old Gatty had never said anything of the kind, but had announced the tinker;—and Charles had embroidered the announcement, to the disparagement of Mr. Bower. “He tossed

me a crown, one day and I put it down the grating into the sewer under his nose. And he asked me about another brother. He's a spy! Is not he always watching and prying after Justin hard enough himself? I know what he wants—I know. I hate him!" And on this the Prodigy burst into a convulsion of tears.

"And if you marry that tyrant, mother——"

"Charlie, hush, I command you!"

"I don't care for hush! I will leave you! I will send you away! I will hate you, too! I will speak to you no more!"—And to this succeeded a fit of passion, which might have made any inexperienced bystander fancy that so slight a frame must break into pieces, or so excitable an owner thereof grow mad.

The Baroness knew her favourite boy, and allowed him to rave. So the storm presently raved itself out, and he was permitted to order what he chose to order as a relish to his tea; and then his mother said to him, "You like to play with that pale Quaker's

child ;—ask her to come to tea," knowing—for she was not a fool—that there was not the most distant chance of such an apparition as Susanna Openshaw's at The Blue Keys. But the boy, who wanted only to be up and doing, was thereon pacified by another clamber up to the Lower Pavement,—and the haste and the failure of his errand worked, for the moment, his passion out of him. Therefore, when he came back, in place of taking tea with any bespoken delicacy, he took sleep, and his mother was left with leisure to consider the interrupted conversation,—Justin passing as merely so much furniture.

She sat and thought, so far as she could think ; she sat and remembered, so far as she was capable of remembrance ; she sat and cried as much as she could cry,—tears coming readily to her. And after she had cried, she thought herself, therefore, a better woman, and one who had taken a resolution. —In brief, the result of her meditation was to make her equal to the interview which was coming. She was prepared for the to-morrow's talk ; and, as a proof of her prepa-

ration, escorted the Prodigy herself, and on foot, to the Lower Pavement at an early hour in the morning, when Mistress Galatea, not emancipated from her curl-papers, was raising a pic.—So the boy, to preclude tricks on the occasion, was sent out to play on the flags.—On the flags there chanced to be walking the daughter of Mistress Galatea's thorn-in-the-side—Susanna Openshaw.

CHAPTER X.

HOW TO WOO.

WHEN the great Mr. Bower of Bower Mills (Lord Caldermere that was to be) appeared as he had promised, the Baroness was as calm as he was (only with an extra blush), and as ready for an immediate encounter of interests as a human creature could be. Yet she was a flighty woman, and he was a strong man; and she had what she represented to herself as strong affections, whereas he had only a purpose.

“Have you reflected, Baroness,” began the visitor abruptly, yet not rudely, “on the proposition I made yesterday? Am I ac-

ceptable enough to induce you to marry me?"

Clever as the woman was, still she could not speak.

"You will find," he went on, after waiting for the reply which came not, "that I am not unfaithful, not inconsiderate, not ungrateful; that if I do not pretend to any tenderness, I have it not in me to be hard to any woman, least of all to the woman I marry. Your life will be prosperous (so far as we can foresee).—Your sons will be provided for; and you will find me on Saturday what you found me on Monday,—in December as in January,—when I am eighty as now when I am fifty,—a companion without charm as I well know, but without falsehood. I do not profess what I cannot fulfil. You may rely on me securely."

The Baroness put up a screen,—that is to say, she cried, and cried naturally—because she wished to gain a moment's time. Mr. Bower sat quite still, doing nothing to appease the tears,—and perhaps for this very cause they stopped. Then he said, "Will you tell me if I am to go on?"

Her lips shaped "Yes," but to have saved her life (not her false but her real life) her voice could not have uttered the word.

"Well, then, I assume that you are not indisposed to receive my offer? I have told you that your sons will be provided for. You have two with you. But there is a third and an elder one? Where? The title must be with him, of course."

"Justin is the representative of the family," said the Baroness, with a most severe effort.

"How? and with an elder brother?"

"Neither Justin nor Charlie (dear boy) have the least idea of bearing the title." She did not think it needful to apprise Mr. Bower that she had acquiesced in Justin's suggestion, in order that the Prodigy might not be placed at a disadvantage. "We have not thought that a family so impoverished had any business with titles. You see, sir, I conceal from you nothing. My boys will have to make their way in the world; and of my Charlie I have never had any fear. He is sure to succeed brilliantly."

"But their elder brother, dear lady?"

persisted Mr. Bower. "I ask you, that we may all see clearly where we stand. In all affairs, it is impossible to be too explicit, for those who wish to make friends and to keep them.—Where is their elder brother? The boys seem never to have known him. How is that?"

"He was a great sorrow to his father," replied the Widow, who thought she might safely indulge herself in a little romancing, "and of course a great sorrow to me and to my sons—and it was best that he should not be where they were."

"To you and to your sons?"

"He was born before the Baron married me."

"I see.—I am to understand, then, that he is a natural son."

"He was.—He is dead, God be thanked!" said the Baroness.

"Who was his mother?—Is she alive?"

No one can estimate how much, in certain junctures, a lie can cost even a weak person, —no one conceive the effort it was for the lady to say, "I really cannot tell you."—Perhaps it might not be thoroughly a lie:—

perhaps, she really *could not*. The truth may have been one too cruel for her to speak.

“She was not likely, I can well conceive,” said Mr. Bower, “to cross your path—being, of course, in another rank of life.—But she, or some one belonging to her, might be capable of claiming you, under changed circumstances—and one cannot too soon make an end of such disagreeable chances.—Who was she?—A low person?—or one who had forgotten herself, in our—your own class?”

“I cannot tell you who his mother was.—I never heard!”—the lady went on in a sort of desperation; feeling that she had nearly committed herself terribly.—And why should she commit herself in a juncture so full of importance to her fortunes? What she said was safe from all chances of being corrected or explained. The object of her subterfuge was dead.

“It is a painful subject, as you may suppose,” she resumed, after another short pause, “but my anxiety is over. I have a letter from Vienna, which, if you will permit

me, I will read to you ; as I think I have heard you say that you do not read German yourself."

She had an attentive listener, who noted and retained every word she read, with that shrewd silence which made the sound of her voice sharp in her own ears,—but she read slowly ; omitting merely a passage here and there, as unimportant to the story.

"I must say," was Mr. Bower's remark when she had ceased, "that I am not sorry you are rid of such an appendage to your late husband's family—though claim he could have none on you.—Well, to the point ;—I propose to take one of your sons home with us, conceiving that you entertain my offer favourably—and he will be placed at once in a position of opulence and comfort. The other I will see educated elsewhere—put out fairly in life, if——"

"O ! the boy will make no objections, dear sir. Justin will have no will but yours, I will answer for him. He is not quick ; a little sullen and reserved, I must own, but he will know his own interest, and appreciate your kind assistance, I am sure."

“So I think. Now as to Charles, your younger son—what do you mean him to be educated for?”

“Charles, Mr. Bower?” gasped the Widow, now beginning to feel doubts, in which there was some pain and terror. “You will decide the best, of course, after a time. He has a hundred strings to his bow. Wild as he is, he is as full of good as he is of genius. Only have a little patience with his caprices and freaks (I fear I have spoilt him), and I will answer for it he will wind himself round your heart, as he does round that of every one who sees him daily.”

“But permit me, Baroness—you must not misconceive me. It is not Charles I shall take home with *us*; but his brother.—The younger lad shall be sent to a good school, and, as I have said, shall be put out in life;—but I mean to make of Justin my right-hand man:—and even if I have a son of my own——Are you ill?”

Ere Mr. Bower could get to the bell, she had fainted. The German letter dropped from her powerless hands, unheeded and overlooked in the shock of a surprise so un-

foreseen. Was her marriage settlement to run thus? flashed through her mind like a death-agony.—Her darling coldly to be pensioned off! the drudge to be selected for favour and fortune!

She knew not how long it was ere she recovered herself. There were women about her, and not Mr. Bower. Only a scrap of paper was handed to her, on which were traced these words: “I have been too precipitate, perhaps, in wearying you with direct inquiries and projects when you are not strong. It will be the best kindness to leave you:—but I am close at hand when you are disposed to see me.”

This delicacy from one who had been so direct, surprised her in no common degree, and gave her thoughts, when they could begin to gather themselves up, new occupation. Such a man was not only worth moulding;—but capable of being persuaded. When he knew her wishes and preference (but how could he have failed to divine them?), he would modify his project in consideration to her feelings.—But, that she might well study all the points and delicacies

of her position, with the determination of carrying her own way, she returned a pencilled message to her future lord, "begging for four-and-twenty hours' respite ere they again entered on topics of such interest. She *was* not strong, and was sure he would spare her."

By way of securing for herself a little quietness, she sent Justin to the Lower Pavement, begging "Gatty dear" to keep the Prodigy there for the night, as had more than once happened before. Should he break in now with any of his unwelcome tricks on the man she desired to mollify, there would be an end of everything;—and she had not forgotten the fierce and feverish outburst of the precocious boy, who had clearly seen what was coming.

This was her starting-point of meditation—that before her marriage, or immediately after, she must, would, and could, right matters as regarded the disposal of her two boys. To give up so brilliant a prospect for herself, for them, for the Prodigy of course, —never for a second suggested itself as the alternative.—Nothing is more singular

than the co-existence of selfishness and affection, in natures like hers; save the sophistries by which it is put out of sight and mystified. She was not capable of self-sacrifice even for her darling;—but then there was to be no sacrifice at all anywhere. She had managed untoward and perverse men ere this. Adalbert, that dead profligate, had, when a boy, been a favourite with his rough father: and yet by a series of nice contrivances, concealed by her off-hand and acquiescing ways, she had jostled him out of his father's favour; out of their house.—So long as he had been there, she had been rebuked by his presence, and he had shown himself as undutiful as deceitful. He would do better if he saw the world, had ran her argument—once having become the Baroness Einstern. It had been a work of time, but she had accomplished it. She could surely accomplish as much again for her dead German husband's legitimate sons, with a reasonable Englishman. Yet she shed profuse tears during half the night, and when she woke in the morning, would have given a large sum of money, had she possessed it, to postpone the interview before her;—and she

prayed (as only superstitious persons can pray when driven into dilemmas from which their own wits cannot extricate them) for some means of temporarily subduing in her favourite—the Prodigy—those rash and reckless spirits which she had hitherto devoted herself to foster. On many, many a stormy night in after years, did she look back to that night of storm.

Her decision, reached at last—not without struggles as severe as one of such a shallow and inconsequent nature as hers can feel—was, for the hour, to be submissive. Her fascinations must come by degrees,—her self-assertion not manifest itself too soon. But it was not without the feelings of a culprit making herself ready for execution, that she composed herself to receive her future lord (and servant), and to make a show of accepting his conditions.

A woman of her age can hardly pass through such a crisis without her appearance being the worse for it. When Mr. Bower entered to seal his bargain, he was not made the more ductile by perceiving that the lilies of the Baroness were somewhat greyer and her roses a trifle yellower

than he had till then seen them;—her eyes more dim, her cheeks a little sunken.—She had forgotten to let down the blind.—He was not less polite, but something more tenacious than he had been. There was no venturing a hair's breadth that day;—and it was not till he had disappeared that the Widow became alive to the fact that she had bound herself to a separation from the darling of her heart, for the sake of the great Caldermere property. Then again she fell into an hysterical fit of weak wretchedness. How bear to see her idol? how tell him? Accordingly, for a second time, to stave off the evil moment, Justin was despatched to the Lower Pavement to request a continuation of Mistress Galatea's hospitalities for the Prodigy.—The day, it should have been told, was Sunday. The chiming bells of St. Brian's, ringing for evening service, sounded in her ears like a passing-bell, and all that could be done to allay the remorse which would rise, was to say, "*I will put it right to-morrow, or——*"

That Sunday was an eventful day for others besides the Baroness.

CHAPTER XI.

UNSETTLED SETTLEMENTS.

THERE was a merry little breakfast of two, at Number Seven on the Monday morning. The Prodigy, for whom a particular cake had been baked, was “acting Miss Ann Ogg” with her owl’s face, and her snuffling voice, made all the bolder by the faint “O fie! dear boy, don’t go on!”—of his hostess.—The window was open, the day was breezy, and there came in a pleasant smell of scabious. Presently the boy began to sing—he had put away, for the moment, all thoughts of The Blue Keys, and what was transacting there—further, as if some irresistibly whim-

sical recollection had seized him, he began to laugh so loudly that a low tap at the parlour door had to be twice repeated before either of the oddly-assorted pair became aware of some one without.

Mistress Whitelamb's dimpled and buxom face almost became peevish, when, in answer to her "Come in,"—Susanna Openshaw presented herself.

"Thou sees, Charles Einstern!"—said the Quaker girl, in a tone of placid reproach, pointing as she spoke to the Prodigy with an expressive finger,—“I ask thy excuse, Galatea Whitelamb, for not speaking to thee first, but——Please, I am come to say, farewell. My father and mother are gone out for a few hours, and as they did not prohibit me before they went out—I expect, thinking it too early—and as I wished to come—I am here to take leave.—Farewell, Galatea Whitelamb :—farewell, Charles Einstern. Thou sees!——” And here again she shook her head sorrowfully, not being one of those who are given to crying.

“Dear me, Miss Susanna,” began Mistress Galatea, entirely bewildered by such a pre-

amble as this. "Taste my cake, though it is not hot. What——"

"What do you mean, Susy?" broke in the boy. "Farewell? Won't those parchement old people let us go to that Radstone place down the valley this morning, that you told me of; where the weeping willows are, and the boat-house?"

"I am going to Aunt Barton's at one o'clock. Thou should not have done it, Charles Einstern. I expect I have never seen my parents so displeased."

The boy turned red, yet still seemed as though he was struggling with some diverting remembrance.

"What has Charlie done to displease anybody, I wish to know?" said Mrs. Galatea, more nettled than was her wont. "I should have thought Mr. and Mrs. Openshaw would have taken it as a compliment, his going to your chapel yesterday afternoon. I am sure they have invited me often enough, though the only time I went I could not make out what they did when they got there. What has he done?"

"My father," continued the girl, plain-

tively, "has found the box of music, that began to warble under Candia Bounty's seat, when she was engaged in supplication. Thou should not have put it there, or, at least, not have wound it up to begin just so inconveniently."

"Bless the boy!" cried Mistress Galatea, breaking into an ecstasy of laughter. "Ay, I missed that wonderful Geneva box, Charlie, yesterday, I did, indeed. And did you actually put it under a bench somewhere, and it went off. O! O! O!" and the good woman was absolutely choked with delight and entertainment;—not displeased in her secret heart that "those Quakers" had been discomfited. "Have you brought his box home?" was the next inquiry.

"No. My father destroyed it with a mallet at seven o'clock this morning. He did not inquire whose property it was—and I did not feel free to speak; but he knew, I expect.—Yesterday evening they agreed that it was better to send me to Aunt Barton's, as I must not walk out on the Pavement any more. They are much incensed, both of my parents. I am to go

at one o'clock, but I wished first to say farewell."

The Prodigy did not care an atom for the fate of his favourite plaything, brought to such an ignominious end. "But they shall not send you away, Susanna," he cried, passionately. "They shall not, I tell you; or I will torment them so. Wretched, stupid, wicked people!" and he stamped with rage.

"Please do not speak of my parents thus," was the reply. "If thou had not been so impetuous, it would not have been so. And I cannot make up for the music-box which my father has destroyed;—and thou wilt be gone before I come back. I expect it is not very probable that I shall see thee again." And, with this, the girl's eyes grew moist. As has been said, she rarely, if ever, wept.

"But I don't expect any such thing," cried Charlie, whom the least opposition always made furious. "Where does your aunt live? I shall come there. Gatty and I shall come—and Gatty shall drive the gig."

The girl named a sea-side town, in part a

watering-place, some hundred miles distant, a place so far off that Mistress Whitelamb "had always thought it was somewhere in Ireland." "Charlie, dear, I never drove a gig. Mr. Smalley had an objection to ladies being masculine, but if I did drive a gig, we could never get so far; and we must not vex Susanna's father and mother. Good-bye, my dear—and stay," stepping to a cupboard well known for its contents, "here is some of my own elder jam. You can spread it on a biscuit if you wish, and eat it as you go along the road."

"I must go now," said Susanna, uneasily, declining the proffered comfort as though she was listening for some one without. "Perhaps thee will not mention that I came, Galatea Whitelamb. Farewell, Charles."

But not so quietly was she let to go. The boy rushed to her, embraced her over and over again, kissing her, as Mistress Whitelamb phrased it, "like one utterly distracted." "She should not go," he declared; "if she did, he would find her out,—and," the witness went on to say, "he would have

given her his gold watch, dear Charlie, he would—he *did* put the chain round her neck — only she would not let him. ‘Friends do not wear chains,’ she said. She did not care for going, I do believe” (closed the narration of this sad parting), “any more than a very icicle. None of those Quakers have the slightest feeling, you know. Mr. Ogg thinks so too.”

There was, however, a later scene at one o’clock ;—when a fly drew up at the ‘Open-shaws’ door, and, after having been duly laden, the girl was handed in by her father and mother,—but not before an eager voice was heard to cry, “Good-bye, dear Susanna, God bless you! God bless you! I’ll marry you in spite of those drab old statues, when I am a man!”

The fly having driven away, there was no more of the Lower Pavement for the Prodigy that day. As Mrs. Meggley described it, “There he came, tearing into The Blue Keys, with a face like fire ;—giving a kick at Mr. Bower’s door as he passed, the Lord alone can guess why! It was a mercy that Mr. Bower was out with Mr. Quillsey, or

Master Charles would have had such a thrashing as The Blue Keys has not seen for many a year."

"What has brought you back already, Charlie?" said the betrothed of the great man, in a voice of many mixed tones and passions. "What is the matter? I thought you would stay till evening."

"They have sent her away, mamma—the little strange girl—because I was fond of her, and taught her how to sing. They have broken my box that Köster gave me, and——Mother, what makes you look so different? Not sorry at all for me?"

Not sorry?—She felt as if her heart must break; and still there was a selfish annoyance at having her own future prospects thus interfered with, and their brightness clouded, by the intimate, monopolising, unmanageable affection of this fiery creature—all impulse, all self-will.

"If I had not been kept up there at good old Gatty's, I should have left those wooden Quakers alone, and then she would not have been sent away. Why did you not want me to stay here, mother?"

“My darling” (and hard, indeed, was the task of steadying her voice), “I am afraid I have spoiled you; but you must cease to be a spoiled child now. I cannot permit you to play any more tricks on *anybody*. They will only make you enemies. They will ruin your chances of fortune. I am speaking to you not as to a child, Charlie. You must learn to be a man, and a man must bear with many things he does not like.”

“I hate that Mr. Bower, I tell you, however, and I will hate him to my dying day, and I would kill him if I could!”—was the reply; the boy lashing himself up into a ferocious passion, which longed to wreak itself on something or somebody.—“You are going to marry him, mother; that has changed you so. Very well, then, I shall hate you, too!”—and he flung himself on the ground, and tore at that long rich hair of his through which no steel had, as yet, passed. There was no soothing him, no silencing him. And this was the boy who had been so merry at breakfast. So loud raged the storm, that Mrs. Meggley (who was intensely curious, and, withal, was be-

ginning to conceive that her guest was worth attending to, for more reasons than one) ventured to inquire from the door if anything was the matter. "The gentlemen in the Commercial Room desired me to say, could they be of any use?"

"Nothing, nothing, thank you, good Mrs. Meggley. Charles is not quite well, but will be better directly.—My boy," this with a tone never used by her before, "*you must* control yourself,—or else, dearly as I love you, I shall have to send you away from me."

A sudden quietness succeeded to the passion: a quietness stranger than the riot had been. But the boy fell to the floor like one dead; and ere the great Mr. Bower came in (to be vexed that day by no impudence or provocation on the part of the Prodigy), the distressed woman would have compounded gladly for all his violent spirits and antipathies, could she have been sure that his life and reason were not in peril.

After many hours the paroxysm passed,—and with it the fears and forebodings of the future Lady Caldermere. She slid pleasantly

back to her old hopes and experiences. She was sure that somehow it would all come right: and so she would go on—and did go on; with something like a growing sense of her impotence to restrain passion already so overblown, and observation so precociously developed; and something like a willingness to trust the reins of government to hands more sinewy than her own,—mixed with perpetual backslidings into fits of inconsequent grief;—but with an eye that never varied when prosperity and position to come presented themselves before it. She might have been seeking an excuse for that which, somehow, she figured to herself, she was predestined to do and to be.—Meanwhile, she kept up appearances wonderfully.

There was no more tempest visible on the part of the boy. If it was pent in, it only showed itself in black circles under the eyes, in a lack of appetite, which troubled sorely the loving and cooking heart of Mistress Whitelamb,—and in a cessation of those quicksilver spirits which had given Charles such a strange fascinating place in the heart of that lonely woman. It showed itself yet

more decidedly in a severance from Justin : not of envy—for the boy was too generous to envy any one—but of contempt, as for one who would accept degradation for the sake of money. Such may have been the workings of heart and brain, of affections and antipathies—workings as unexplained, as they were misunderstood, in this precocious creature.

There was no dealing with them, no setting of anything to rights, ere the marriage took place.—For take place the marriage did; and three weeks after that Sunday, Mistress Galatea Whitelamb called herself cousin to Lady Caldermere of Caldermere.—“Dear me,” said she to herself, “if Mr. Smalley could have only lived to see this!—But what is to become of that sweet precious Charles, I wonder?”

PART THE SECOND.

STUDENT LIFE.



CHAPTER I.

SEVEN YEARS LATER.

BETWIXT seed-time and the swelling of the ear that is to ripen ere harvest-tide, the intervening period may offer little, save minute variety of incident, and that gradual progress which is to be felt rather than traced. Yet Nature is not asleep during those months. Nor were the persons of this story without their changes during the seven apparently uneventful years which followed Lord Caldermere's marriage.

The world pronounced the couple per-

fectly mated ; and not having known Sybil before her marriage, was not aware of the entire transformation which had passed over her since that period.—It was not in her dress alone ; her very face had changed ;—her manner of speaking. She was now composed,—if not cold, rarely lively. It might be noted that she seemed involuntarily to consult her husband before she spoke. This passed for her deference and good understanding between them, with the many. *He* knew better. Ere the knot had been tied ten days, he discovered that he had made a grave, final mistake—that the woman whom he had induced to marry him, and his wife, were two entirely different beings. He was sure that either false pretences had been put on before their marriage, or were now.—It was his strength, or his weakness, never to own a mistake ; since, by ignoring it, he thought whatever ill consequences might arise were the best to be fought through, or averted. His wife, then, was secure from any ill treatment on his part—from any failure of that which had been promised her—but she had none of her husband's confidence ;—in place of

this, an instinct that she was watched day and night, by one whom the slightest sign might enable to read her thoughts.—His other disappointment, however, was not hers. They had no children. What could new children have been to her except new cares?

They lived six months of each year in London, while the new pile at Caldermere was rising and being garnished under the auspices of Mr. Quillsey.—Its master went to and fro; but she remained stationary—glad, perhaps, to avoid the Blackchester neighbourhood, at least, till her residence at The Blue Keys should be forgotten. No friends gathered round her in London. The mask she wore gave no ground for cavil, but offered no matter to interest.—They kept abundance of worshipful society, however, such as may be kept for their proprietors by any good cook and rich cheque-book—but they made no intimacies. Lord Caldermere became a solid politician; one whose few words had weight—but not one of those who are marked out for office. He was wise enough to know this;—to feel that a step

higher might set him among thorns. And then, he had no child to leave a great name to.

His choice of Justin (Mr. Einstern Bower, as the young man was now called) proved as satisfactory, as his choice of Justin's mother was the reverse.—Perhaps, because the mother was cold to her favoured son,—whose advancement, at her secret heart, she impotently resented—did he add trust to trust, confidence to confidence; and ere the seven years were over, Justin had been installed as manager of almost all the undertakings, which one of Lord Caldermere's rank could now only gracefully direct in the second person. Thus, the surface of these three lives appeared to bystanders smooth, prosperous, and without any trouble.—The outside world does not reckon what it is for women and men to live on, and to approach age, without the attachment of friends and kindred.

The seven years went over more eventfully for the Prodigy.

Everything had been done for Charles which had been undertaken. He had chosen

to become a musician ; and to this end, and to complete his education, he had been placed with a Protestant clergyman in a North German town, where excellent schooling in music was administered by competent professors.—His ample allowance was regularly sent to the pastor.—But it may have been too sternly, too frivolously forgotten, how precocity had been fostered in the boy—or rather, almost forced on him—how he had been encouraged in a quickness of judgment which was impudent in so young a creature—been permitted to riot in his likes and dislikes, without the remotest idea of concealing or controlling them.—Constraint and compulsion did nothing to reduce him to reason ; an element of recklessness having been added to the character of one already alive to his own power and fascination—by the intolerable circumstance which had separated him from the being whom he had scolded, played with, ruled, and loved. When the return of love such as his is first felt to fail—woe to the young!—In proportion as they are young, are they actually sensitive to such a discovery ;—in proportion as they have been

unnaturally fevered and developed, how much more so!—Before Charles was ten years of age,—a spot of decay was in the boy's heart;—never, never more to be wholly soothed away, nor eaten out of it.—He had found out the falsity of that which, till then, had been, to him, divine in its shelter, in its truth, in its sympathy!—the professed love of a mother.—He had not found out (how should any boy, had he been thrice as precocious?) that there can be such a thing as sentiment in which affection has a real share—yet selfishness, withal, as large a part—and that this compound is the compound which circulates the most widely in the world—seeing that many a million useful human beings live easy lives, and die placid deaths, without having detected the alloy mixed with the true gold.—Clear-sightedness, often and often, only comes at the moment when heartache after heartache, when disappointment after disappointment—have done their work;—and when the sufferer is made just and lenient, in self-protection—as the only alternative to morbid desolation.

Of all the bright, clever, troublesome

scholars that ever entered a school, at all events Charles Einstern was the most troublesome one. When Rector Orelius tasked him heavily with Greek and Latin,—the task was learned and retained before others had begun to plod; and the wicked, incessant creature was idling and seducing his fellow-students to idle, by his lavish treats and his merry sayings.—At an early period he got possession of, and forestalled the allowance made him,—which, for a German student, was preposterous.

“Well, I must have money, Mr. Orelius, and you must give it me;—I have not a *thaler* in my pocket to buy a book, or a bit of paper with,” he would say.

“But you had five English pounds only yesterday,” would be the answer;—and with such a look of such a pair of saucer eyes,—through *such* spectacles as is only to be seen in Germany.

“Well, if I had, it is spent,” would be the excuse,—“and so I must have some more. I know you have lots of money for me still; dear Mr. Orelius.”

“But I will not give it to you, Charles.”

“Then I will get into debt.”

“But I will not pay your debts. You know my regulations are precise.”

“Then I will run away.”

And so, ninety times out of the hundred our Prodigy got his will—for Rector Orelus, and even that poor narrow drudge, his wife—at best, half a bad cook, half a stingy housekeeper,—could not help loving one so young, so gracious, so generous, who kept their house alive by his high spirits.—Then, the Rector was not superior to the vain-glory of representing in the town his inmate as the son-in-law of a rich English Lord, who was sure, one day, to make Charles his heir.—This, however, could only be done sparingly and cautiously; seeing that the boy’s solitary hatred, deep-rooted and dark, was a hatred to England. To speak of the country, to recommend it in his hearing, was enough to raise a storm in the music-school.—Thus, the English scholars, put at a disadvantage, and under restraint for his sake, loved him accordingly; and none the more because, besides being the richest, he was the most distinguished pupil in the establishment.

There, too, he presently acquired a renown and a rule, which made it difficult to deal with him, save as he pleased. He addressed himself to Music with a passionate steadiness, such as marked none of his other pursuits,—which showed that his whole heart was in the matter,—but even when studying those most prosaic and laborious branches of science, on which, for basis, Fancy is to devise structures of Art,—he leaped forward, as it were, where others creep or walk heavily.—An incomparable memory, an almost preternatural faculty of divination, a happy adroitness in all exercises of hands as well as of head, were combined in him to no common perfection.—For better, for worse, he was the pride and the torment of the music-school. His remarkable promise was beginning to be noised abroad in North Germany, and together with it his audacity of repartee, and his caprice in the exhibition of his genius.—From the hour, when on the occasion of a crowned head visiting the town to decorate the best pupils with honours and harangues, he steadily refused when called

on, at a moment's warning, to improvise on the pianoforte, or to read at sight, or to display his amazing knowledge of every school, style, and epoch ;—and merely would confine himself to doing what every other youth of the first class could do—his fame was made ;—since there were less august persons, more thoroughly acquainted with their subject, who could tell what young Einstern could do besides, when it pleased his humour. And so he was wondered at, by a large party of old and young dreamers, for his independence as well as his genius.

“As if it was worth making a show of one's self to that old sheep's face!” was his own irreverent manner of treating the affair in question,—for the benefit of a comrade who chanced to be leaving the concert-room at the same time.

Poor Becker sighed.—“The unequal lot,” he said softly to himself ;—but not too softly to be overheard.—He was a youth of bad health, an ungainly presence, a confused manner, and was held to be slow of comprehension. Perhaps among all the pupils he was the shyest and the least

popular one : and had kept at a distance from every one,—from Einstern especially—with a steadiness, which amounted to a difficulty to be overcome. — The Prodigy did not admit difficulties.

“Why, Becker,” said Charles, turning back, and putting his hand on the other’s shoulder, “I did not play better than you, to-day ; and you played very well.—I saw the old Count next the King, with the white hair and the pocket-book, putting down your name. Cheer up, and come and sup with us for once, like a hearty fellow. Why do you keep yourself to yourself so much ? You might be a horrible Englishman.”

Becker declined awkwardly. He had an engagement. . . .

“Now, you have no such thing,—you only want to go home, and sit up and work.—You never go anywhere ! You never let any one in.—Come ! if you don’t like the noise of those other fellows, you shall come with me alone—and we shall sup at The Golden Cross, instead. Becker, I’m resolved to make you like me.”

The youth thus assaulted, trembled and turned as red as a girl,—but the Prodigy had got hold of his arm, and would not let him go.—“What! it’s a holiday to-night, and you are slaving yourself to death! Why do you work so hard? I never do.”

“Ah! but then——” Becker stopped. There was no envy, though, in his tone.

“Ay, you think I have all my own way!—So I have with these pedants here!—But you have no troubles to compare with mine! You have somebody to care for you!—They say you have a sister. Come, tell me all about her, and don’t be so dismal. You will make as good a fortune as any of us! Every one knows how much you know. Why are you always so sad, and keep away so from everybody?”

The shy youth was shaken, in part by his gleam of success, in part by the irresistible cordiality of his comrade, out of his usual deliberate reserve. He had no choice but to yield himself captive; and with the *Amphitryon*, aged about seventeen,—as old,

already, as many a man of three-and-forty,—he was presently seated, and served, in the most cozy corner of the great eating-room at The Golden Cross—with a bounteous supper, such as few students have often been treated to.

The good cheer had its effect; and its caterer was not too young to feel how hospitality warms the heart of him who offers it, to him who will partake of it.—They must needs, too, those two boys!—have a bottle of good Rhine wine,—and the outpouring of this assisted to unseal Becker's lips.

“Ah, God!” he burst out, with the air of one amazed at his own vehemence,—“and if I were envious of you, so young, so handsome, so quick, so rich, so popular as you are,—who could wonder?—But I am not.—I only keep away from everybody because I am poor and dull, and can make no friends. O, Einstern—save for that one creature, my sister—I wish—I wish—I was dead!—It is too hard to fight on, as I do—I am nineteen, and work as

I will, I can hardly keep both of us alive ;—and there is no chance of things becoming better.”

“Because you *will* make no friends!—Becker, I have plenty—and I will get plenty more!—If money were all!—But, come now ; tell me everything about your sister and yourself,—I can keep secrets,—and we will be friends ; and perhaps I may help you out a little.”—On this, Becker began his story.

CHAPTER II.

THE UNEQUAL LOT.

“YOU know,” said Becker, “we were orphans; my sister and I.—Well; our father was a Saxon officer—and our mother was a dancer;—and they both died when we were bits of children:—and so, we had to go to my mother’s brother—the composer Semler—you have heard of him;—and he was then living in Thuringia.—He is, after all, not so bad a composer.

“But my uncle is an unlucky being. He was a beautiful man when he was young.—All the ladies were in love with him; and wrote him letters, and sympathised when none of his works could

appear.—And he knew he could make music.—But nothing ever came right for him. He would be free: and he would not bend to any one: and every person about him encouraged him in his opposition. It is so beautiful, is liberty.—And Beethoven broke loose, also:—and my poor uncle thinks he is as great as Beethoven. Well: he has tried operas, symphony pieces,—church music—songs.—But nothing of his has been produced. He is really unlucky.—His ‘Rubezahl’ was just coming out on the stage at Lissau:—and the night before it was ready, the theatre caught fire. He had no copy of the opera—because he was too poor to pay a copyist, and could not bear the drudgery.—Also, the theatre was burnt to the ground.—Indeed, and copying, it is wearisome, I know it so:—and he is a genius!

“Well: this unluckiness with his ‘Rubezahl’ made him lose his reason for three-quarters of a year:—and he has never entirely recovered it. Then the journals would be of no assistance to him, because he could not afford to bribe the writers. He grew

odd, and angry, and careless. He began to drink terribly—and to roam away for weeks and weeks at a time—who could know where?—This was not long after Marie and I went to live with him—Marie and I—for we had nowhere else to go.—Our father left nothing but debts. Great Heaven!—it was a cruel life! We were sometimes all but starved : shut up in a dark house, with cruel, mean people : who beat us, when he was away, because he did not pay the rent. And once they did turn us out in the rain ; and we might have sat on the step all night, had not a friendly bookseller taken pity on us, and let us sleep on the floor of his shop. Uncle came back next day.”

“ Was he kind to you when he was at home ? ”

“ When he was not in his fits : but, then, great Heaven ! what a life !—Once, because I coughed when he had sat down to make a symphony (he would begin thirty, one after the other), he broke the chair to pieces on which he was sitting to beat me with. I could not move for days !—Once, because

he heard Marie playing with a little girl on the staircase, he tied her by the wrists to the top of the door; but she screamed so, that the neighbours, bad as they were, came in:—and he was taken before the magistrates, and put into a madhouse. He was kept there for eighteen months: and has never been so frantic since,—though now he goes roaming about like a beggar: and for whole months they never see him.”

“And what became of you?”

“I blacked shoes in the inns—I held horses in the streets—I have fed on crusts thrown out to animals, because they were too hard for human beings to eat. I got into the state school: and used to sew for a tailor till four in the morning, and sleep two hours. Yes, it was hard! God knows how I learned to read and write (I write very badly)—and the servant of Count Grillberger lent me a fiddle sometimes, and I learned to play on it: and used to play at fairs, for my supper.”

“But your sister—what became of her?”

“We have an old aunt—Madame Claussen—living at Tübingen, in Swabia, who has

just enough to live on : and she happened to see Marie, and to take a fancy to her.—She had been a dancer, too,—and they want to make a dancer of Marie, and I shall not be able, I fear” (this with tears in his eyes) “to prevent it much longer. How can I speak?—O God! and she is so beautiful and so wild, and so ill brought up!—Aunt Claussen is, in some respects, a very giddy woman, who has been about a Court some time, and can talk of nothing but princes and fine clothes! But she lets Uncle Semler come there—when he will be quiet—because every now and then he can still earn a little. There is dance-music to be written—and sometimes he will play in a garden band, when he is very poor.—But then he roams away again, whenever he has the least money in his pocket.—If I could not send them something from time to time, they would take Marie to Vienna, and make a dancer of her; and as it is, Aunt Claussen says she must have more money, or else I must take charge of her altogether, at a year from this time.”

“How did you get here, then?”

Some God-fearing folk, Becker replied, had put together a very little sum, in compassion for the boy so miserably left: who struggled so hard: and who had showed some talent for music: and had sent him to study on a pittance which could hardly keep life and soul together.—He was unwilling to tell this part of his story—but Charles and the wine by degrees drew out of him, in bits and fragments, the rest.—Literally, by living within this allowance, on a grinding economy close on starvation—by incessant extra-drudgery—no matter of what kind, provided it was paid for, this poor youth had actually wrung out a small allowance for this dear sister: and Aunt Claussen was pacified, and was teaching the girl what she knew herself. “Ah! how beautiful Marie must be!” he burst out again, “and growing tall, she writes! It is three years, and I have not seen her! Last vacation I travelled with a merchant family from London, who wished to have some one to interpret for them, and teach their children English.—I used to brush their clothes, and clean their

shoes!—We were as near her as Stuttgart, and they would not give me leave for four-and-twenty hours, though I told them I would pay for myself in the post-waggon. . . . And so I missed my only chance of seeing her for a long time.”

The story was one to touch Einstern to the heart.—“Never mind, Becker,” said he, laughing away his emotion, and grasping the other’s hand affectionately, “we’ll have bright days yet, I promise you! Only you shall not kill yourself with working so hard.—I’ll take care of you, till you can make your own fortune; and you soon will. You learn so thoroughly.—Have you any of your uncle’s music with you?—He has written all sorts of things, I know. I’ll play some at the next concert.”

“If they will let you.”

“LET ME? They shall! And if it is not very good, we’ll fit it up somehow or other, and Grieß shall buy it and publish it.—Meanwhile—come! there’s another glass of Liebfrauenmilch in the bottle. To better days for both of us, say I!”

It was the course of the Prodigy’s luck to

run smooth whatever he dared, whatever he did;—and that night he was in his bed, as a well-conditioned and orderly youth should be, without any one of the Orelus household discovering how jovially he had supped—to wake next morning without a headache.

His new friend was less fortunate; being met in the street by Burgomaster Twiese, an inveterate slow gossip, in the plight of one who walks in a dream.—Becker's name, accordingly, figured with a black mark opposite to it, in the University Book of Conduct.—The unequal lot!

CHAPTER III.

A COMRADE.

SOME mornings after the unlucky concert and wine-supper, the good Rector was disturbed in his study at an early hour by an apparition unusual within its borders—that of Mrs. Orelus.

“What is this? Do you not see I am busy?” said he, not troubling himself to remove his pipe from his mouth.

“Mr. Meshek, my dear: Mr. Meshek is here, and says he must speak to you.”

“What can I want with Mr. Meshek?—He is a man I have nothing to say to—I am busy, tell him. He must go away——”

Mrs. Orelus was back again almost as soon as gone—shaking and looking unusually puzzled. “But Mr. Meshek says he must speak to you: he wants to know from yourself whether anything has been lost out of the house.”

“Now give me patience, woman! As if the house was not *your* business.—What have I to do with it? Where is he? It is only some nonsense, I am sure!” And the Rector wiped his pen with a sigh, and turned away wistfully from his treatise on “Psychological Affinities not to be Understood.”

The Israelite broker—a man of questionable repute—was shown in. The Rector, though on most occasions comfortable to visitors, did not ask this one to sit down. It was no matter.—Meshek bowed obsequiously, and began at once:

“It is my duty to come to you, honoured sir, to show you something. Indeed, I have been uneasy ever since the affair took place. But one of your young gentlemen has been wanting to borrow of me, a day or two since; and when I reminded him of the rules, and

that we could not lend without leave of young gentlemen's guardians—he told me I could not refuse to buy.—Here are some of the things.—The fur coat I could not bring." And before the astounded eyes of the good Rector was spread out nearly all the stock of trinkets, in which the Prodigy had been not uncharitably accused of fooling away his money.

"All his drawers have been locked these many days past," said the Rector's horror-stricken helpmate, who cared for the boy's wardrobe. "They were never locked before."

"Call him.—Let us hear what this means, Lotte!—Say he must come at once. He will not tell me a lie, I know.—You have been tempting him, you bad man!"

The Jew shrugged his shoulders, and gave back, when Charles, entering, set eyes on him.—One glance at Meshek,—another at the table, told the boy how matters stood.

"You poor miserable creature!" shouted he, spitting in the Jew's face. "Do you think it is worth my while to tear your hair from your head? Don't be afraid!" Then,

with an instant calmness, "What have you to say to me, Mr. Orelus?"

"These things," was the Rector's answer, in a grave and sad voice, as he pointed to the trinkets, "and your passion, speak for themselves.—I am very sorry to see them, Charles. What have *you* to say?—Go, Meshek,—I shall take care that you are well watched. Lotte, leave us."

"What have you to say?" repeated the Rector, when the two were alone.

"You know, sir," replied the Prodigy, firmly, "I wanted money on Tuesday last, and you refused it me. That is what I have to say."

"Wanted money?—Yes, when do you not want money?—What for did you want it? if I had had it for you—which I have not."

"Well, sir, I thought so; and as I would have money some way or other, you see what I did. I never deny what I have done."

"But why did you want it?"

"I decline to answer you, sir: because it concerns other people, and out of no disre-

spect to you, Mr. Orelus; for you have done your best to be kind to me."

The Rector was softened. "I am anxious about you, Charles.—Do you wish me to write home to your friends, that you have taken to bad ways?"

"To my friends, indeed! . . . I wrote myself to England on Tuesday. To bad ways?"

"Ay: and to bad company. You were out supping at The Golden Cross on Monday night: and your companion was met drunk in the street afterwards. No wonder, if such be your associates, if such be your practices, that you disappointed every one so entirely on Monday, as you did at the concert, when we were all hoping to be so proud of you."

The youth hardened under this speech: drew himself up, and the tale, which might otherwise have poured out, never came. "You will see, Mr. Orelus.—I promise you, on my honour, that I shall raise no more money from Meshek while I stay here.—The rest is not worth explaining."

"Not worth explaining to me!" said the

Rector, asserting himself with difficulty. "And you show no signs of contrition?—Then, painful as it is, I must write to England."

"You will do as you please," was the haughty answer, as Charles left the room.

The result of this encounter was unfortunate for the Prodigy: inasmuch as it stiffened every fibre of self-assertion. Little past childhood as he was, it was a point of honour, with the precocious man, to fight for, and to protect one who had become undeservedly suspected for his sake.—His interest in Becker became a ruling passion. He had already, as he had in part owned, written to England, begging for an advance on his next year's allowance, for the purpose of assisting a friend: and binding himself to make the remnant suffice, without further applications of the kind. Week after week, however, passed—two, three months—and no answer came. It was of no consequence, save to make him more and more determined on the pursuit of the one object to which he had devoted himself—to knit him closer and closer to his protégé. His

guardian in vain incessantly remonstrated against an intimacy of which he, unjustly, thought so ill. "I told you, Mr. Orelus, that I would get no more into debt; and I am keeping my word," was his cold and proud reply. "As to what people say, or think, what matter? I will choose my friends for myself. Thank God, I am not to be in this owls' nest much longer."

The idolatry which this championship inspired in its object was without limit.—It was as dangerous to the Prodigy on the one side, as was misunderstanding on the other;—but to the melancholy, fortune-spited creature, such enthusiastic kindness amounted to a blaze of warm miraculous sunshine, which altered the temperature and colour of his cheerless life. Becker's sickly face lit up: he began to make more rapid progress in his studies. He was now able to speak hopefully of the future: and who could wonder?—for Charles had said to him: "Becker, you shall come along with me, when I begin my career, and stay with me, and help me till you can settle yourself. I have enough for both. Ah! I see

you have had a letter to-day. Is she well?"

"Quite well: and see, she writes, 'Surely you must have met our guardian-angel in disguise!' Where are your letters? I ask at the Post, whenever I go there! How long they are in coming!"

"*My* letters!" said the Prodigy, biting his lip wrathfully. "O, I dare say I may get one when they have nothing better to do!—But they have never been so long in writing before;" and Charles fretted at the idea of his having submitted to the abasement of being kept waiting the first time he had asked for a slight favour:—for only a few pounds of their paltry money—and to help a friend with!—This suspense had lasted too long (Mr. Orelus having received the usual quarter's remittance, without a word of message or explanation),—when news arrived that a large party of foreign noblemen and ladies, and some of the smaller Princes and Princesses in the neighbourhood, being entirely weary of all the routine gaieties of the stagnant little capitals round about—were coming down to the Fair to

shop, and to be otherwise as well entertained as the town could entertain them. The richer burghers—in a flutter of vain-glory—clubbed to give them a concert, which was to be followed by a ball, in their great public room. The invitation was graciously accepted; and some fantastic personage begged, that if a concert there was to be, the guests might be treated to the wonder of whom so many musicians had been talking for months past,—and who would not play his best before the King!

“I will play my best this time,” said Charles, when called upon.—“It shall be my beginning-night; and Becker shall turn over for me.”

“And what will you play?”

“Whatever you choose—so that you leave me one piece to please myself.” And thus it was settled.

The day drew near. The Prodigy was observed seriously to bend himself to preparation as he had never done before, and, for the moment, to lay aside all the whim and imperiousness which had given him so false a notoriety. But the secret of his own

individual display he would tell to nobody—not even to his idolater and confidant. “No, you shall go into the room among the company, and listen, Becker;—for I shall play my last *solo* from memory.”

The day came, and the friends were shut up in the Prodigy’s room a couple of hours before the festivity—building castles in air by the thousand—when the servant maid brought in a letter. The sight made the eyes of Charles flash.—“Go—go, dear Jacob—I must read this alone. . . . Don’t be later than seven; and don’t forget a flower in your button-hole, and clean gloves;—those we bought yesterday. Make yourself as neat as you can.”

And Becker was turned out; and the door was double-locked.

Five minutes after this, the Rector’s quiet household was disturbed by most violent noises. The two maids with eyes as round as shillings rushed up to the garret, where Mrs. Orelus was laying out muslins to dry, with the tale that the English Lord was fighting with the chairs and tables like a madman; and O Heaven! the Rector was

out, as usual, at The Delight, for his coffee and his newspaper. The tale was only too true; and Mrs. Orelus recollected, with a breaking heart, that her best furniture had been absorbed into their lodger's chamber. She tapped at the door, having tried the lock in vain. "She might as well," was her own after phrase, "have tapped at a thunder-storm, for any chance she had of getting a hearing." Presently the war within ceased,—and a low moaning was heard, as of some one in great pain—but this lasted for only a few seconds.—She tried and tapped again. No answer.—She sent Betty in quest of male aid from the floor below—but Burgo-master Twiese was one of the Rector's gossips—and was at The Delight with his friend; the two sitting sedately on the prospects of United Germany.—This failing, and quieter sounds within being heard of feet pacing to and fro, the anxious woman could do nothing better than post one maid on the steps, and the other at a window in an upper story, to watch for the return of the master of the house—while she stationed herself on the stairs—"ready to scream into

the street, if the uproar began again ;” and leaving her darling labours in the garret to take care of themselves.

A day, she thought, passed before the Rector and Herr Twiese were to be heard round the corner, drawling home.—Ere they were seen, however, the terrible inmate issued from his chamber.—His appearance startled Mrs. Orelus almost as much as the battle with the furniture had done. He had grown (she was used to declare afterwards) an inch at least taller—and was as pale as a spectre, even to his lips—with leaden-black circles under his eyes : but as still as a stone, save for some trembling of the hand which held his embroidered student’s cap.—He was more carefully dressed than usual.—He bowed to her without speaking, and passed on. When she entered his chamber, every chair and table were in their usual places, every book and paper on the latter rigidly arranged (a thing never before seen on his premises), and the solitary witness of the past paroxysm which had stirred the inmate so fiercely, and given him the air of one

strung up to some great defiance, was in a multitude of fragments of paper showered over the floor, torn so small that a Penelope's patience could not have connected them so as to enable any one to read a single short word of their contents.

The letter from home was from Justin, and ran thus :

(COPY.)

“ I am directed by Lord Caldermere to reply to yours, dated some four months ago. It would have been earlier answered but for their absence on the Continent, and its having to be forwarded. I regret to say that my reply is not favourable to your request. Lord Caldermere declines explicitly to make any advance on your allowance—be the object what it may—conceiving it, as at present remitted, sufficient for your education, and liberal as regards your pleasures.

“ Something besides, more painful still, I am instructed to convey to you.—I am to express the concern which is felt at official reports—not rumours—which have been

forwarded from those under whose care you are pursuing your studies. On a late occasion, it is said, you failed to realise the expectations which every one had been led to entertain; and it is added, that neither your own habits nor chosen friends are such as augur well for the future of one who is to make his own career.—No further remonstrance, I grieve to add, will be offered to you.—Mr. Orelus will be enjoined to be more strict in his control over you than he appears to have been: and it is hoped that what is said, and must, if necessary, be done, with the view of strengthening yourself against yourself, will prove effectual.—Your mother joins in love with your affectionate brother,

“JUSTIN EINSTERN BOWER.”

What there may have been in a private postscript, on the second leaf—not even seen by the Prodigy, and torn up, in the hurricane of his rage and disappointment—will never be certainly known.

“We must end all this, Lotte,” said the

Rector, when his helpmate, chorused by the two maids, had offered her puzzled and exaggerated report. "He grows more and more unmanageable and turbulent: and it is all that bad Becker's influence. He is sure to do something mortifying at the concert; so I will not go there: but sup, instead, with Twiese.—He has had to-day a present of sea-fish."

CHAPTER IV.

A BRILLIANT SUCCESS.

THE concert-room was gaily hung with those garlands which the Germans excel in making: and was handsomely filled by the anxious inhabitants of the place, who had decked themselves out with more trouble and thrift than taste—to do honour to a festival which had already caused much lively hatred and jealousy in the town—since it had been announced that only a selected society could be invited: and that, by way of proving the fashion and aristocratic character of the festival, the music would begin at the late hour of seven, instead of half-past six.

“Now what, and who, is this seventh wonder of the world?” said a tall and fair young lady in the front row of the guests, playing with a bracelet, whose large clasp, set with diamonds, had already appalled many a female of the town. “English is he, or what? Somebody said he was English. Einstern is not an English name. There never came a musician from that country—and, Heavens! the women dress as badly almost as—these do!—Thank you, Zuccaglio,”—to the attendant gentleman who handed her a concert bill. “You can tell us who he is, I dare say.”

“I will tell you, Princess. I take him to be half an Austrian—the son of an old brute, Wolf Einstern he used to be called, who lived in a castle somewhere down beyond Landek, and had ruined himself by play before he succeeded to the estate.—He came to Vienna once, with a strange-looking woman, I just recollect; and there was a scandal of some sort about them.—All I know is, that he had a natural son. This may be the natural son.”

“Well—I hear from Holzbrenner, among

others (and he does not joke), that such a genius has never been seen since the days of Mozart—and not for music alone, but for languages too—and that he has quite the good manners of a man of the world. If one half be true, it must have come by nature. What a place to be brought up in!—Look at that row of pedantic, painful faces in spectacles, and those great hands! Are all those fat old men professors, Zuccaglio?”

“Most of them, mademoiselle, I believe,” was the reply—“and——”

“Hush! we must listen.”—And the concert began.

After the symphony—and the great air from “Titus” toiled through by a strenuous damsel, with poppies on her cheeks and elbows, and a thicket of acorns on her head—there was a brief pause. The heads of two or three grave functionaries might be seen, conning together anxiously, as if some disappointment or mistake might be feared: but in an instant afterwards the Prodigy stepped quietly into the orchestra, book in hand.—He turned for a moment as he came, with the question, “Where’s

Becker?—Not come yet? Then I will play without my book”—laid down his music, and, with a slight reverence, took his place at the pianoforte. He might have sat there all his life—so composed, yet without immodest assurance, was his manner.—Once he looked up, with a slight smile and movement of the head, to the conductor—and Weber's "Concert Stück" began.

Every musician knows what can be made of this glorious work by one having poetry at his heart and fire in his fingers;—every listener can recollect some lucky evening when composer, player, and audience, have had each a share in the complete rapture—every human creature, save the envious and sour, has some time or other yielded to the generous enchantments of youth and promise.—This was one of such evenings to be marked with a white stone.—As the excitement rose, and the strain of fervid poetry developed itself under the flying fingers of the player—the weary, fixed look began to melt out of his face—and his eyes to brighten—and his lips to tremble. Everything for the moment was

forgotten—save the delight of unlimited control over a beautiful art.—When all was over, Charles shook back his curls, with a happy smile, in which was no grimace, as he acknowledged the thunders of applause from the Princesses and Princes close before him, and the band behind him (there were old men among the players who had tears in their eyes);—then turning abruptly, as if missing some one, he left the orchestra.

“The ball is at that boy’s foot, papa,” said the fair languid lady of the bracelet to the personage beside her (who, it was said, killed time on the violoncello). “It is all true, and more.—I never heard anything so easy yet so full of passion.—We must know more about him.—You are always talking about the orchestra you intend to get up. Why not secure him and make him conduct it, and play trios with you, and duets with me?—I cannot bear to play duets with men who have coarse knobs of hands, and thumb-rings on them.”

The others who contributed to the concert were objects of pity that night. It is remembered to this day, in the annals of the

town, as the *Einstern* night;—but stranger and more memorable things were still to be achieved than that opening triumph.—Twice more did the *Prodigy* appear; once in another well-known master-work, with even greater applause than at first;—the second time, in that piece of individual display, the secret of which had been confided to no one—not even to *Becker*.

“His own composition,” ran in a loud whisper among the audience, as *Charles* took his seat; this time looking round the room slowly, ere he began—it was thought, by those who did not know him, to bespeak indulgence.

The music was not a piece of his own composition, however;—but one betokening invention only just rescued from utter lawlessness and incoherence by the exquisite manner in which crudities were glossed over, and touches here and there thrown in to strengthen weak passages. Towards the close of the fantasia, the attention of the listeners, which had been somewhat stretched, was raised to the highest point, by an outburst which there was no mistaking for other than

it was—an inspiration of the moment, in fancy and science, and irresistible executive power, outdoing even the marvels of the artist's previous displays. It is not enough to say that when at last the close came, the player was rapturously greeted. The men roared at him (Princes and all)—the women stood up, cried out, waved their handkerchiefs, and flung flowers, one or two the wreaths from their heads, at him.—This time he stood there for an instant or two, panting slightly, and irresolute ; his eyes still searching for some one.

In another moment he came down among the audience.—“For a poor scholar,” said he, with a bow and a smile ; gracefully holding out his embroidered cap, as he made the circuit of the grandees ;—with a moment's change of tone to one of the Professors, utterly dumbfounded by so startling a proceeding, who tried to arrest him,—“Sir, I ask nothing from *you*.—For a poor scholar, your Highness !”

If a new success had been contrived for the Prodigy, here it was, with a vengeance ! The Prince laughed, shook hands with

Charles, and dropped his offering into the treasury. Still more liberal were the ladies; and the earnest and affectionate burgher girls, every one of whom was in love with the Prodigy, and longing to rush forward with her little mite, were stayed and abashed, for a moment, by the sight of the coveted bracelet, with its dazzling clasp, falling into the same receptacle.

“I have not a pair, and I am sorry,” said the pretty young Russian, every feature of her face working with enthusiasm; “but come and play for me so well another time, and you shall have the second! Never, never did I receive such enjoyment from music! —And that was your own composition?”

“Only the *cadenza*, gracious lady,” said the Prodigy, meeting the large blue glistening eyes of the donor. “Thank you, and may your noble heart be blessed as it deserves. —But” (in a whisper to be heard by herself alone) “do not think I take it for myself,”—and he passed on: his gathering becoming richer and richer with every step; and with every step an increase

of devouring admiration and sympathy among the bystanders, and of his own buoyancy of spirit.

“No, no, my dears”—he was now at last in the midst of his female townsfolk,—“I will have nothing from you but your kind wishes to take away with me!—I have been brought up among you; I have danced with you all;—I will come back some day, and give you all a ball in this very room.—No!—no! . . . Thank you with all my heart’s love!” . . . But in spite of this wholesale refusal of the little tributes and trinkets pressed on him, there are malicious people who aver to this day, that while passing from the room, like one who trod on air, the Prodigy absolutely snatched a kiss from the fortunate lips of Burgomaster Twiese’s daughter.

Others gave a different version of the salute, —Minna Twiese being, in her way, an heiress and not bashful; as one in request among all the students, indeed, could not be.—She had been most bold and eager, said the girls, in pressing towards him;—and that was the way to get the best of everything.

The orchestra saluted him with a flourish

of trumpets. They cheered him as he went out, in spite of the scandal which his behaviour had caused among the Professors.—They cheered him down the long, ill-lighted staircase.—“And to think,” he muttered, “that yonder nightcap should not have been there, to hear what I could make of his uncle’s mad music !”

“Becker, I say ! — Becker, where are you ?” By the time he was at the bottom of the stairs there was a dead silence.

“O, Mr. Orelus, what do you say to me now ? I told you I would have the money !” —and he shook a ringing chime from his cap in the face of the Rector. The latter stood at the foot of the stairs, with a servant bearing a lantern behind him ; and close to her—a stranger sight in such a place—the Rector’s wife.

“Stop a moment, Charles,” said the Rector, in a low voice ; “I was waiting for you.—I have something serious to say to you.”

CHAPTER V.

AN ARREST BY THE GREAT CREDITOR.

“I TELL you, you must stop!—You *must* hear me!” repeated the Rector, laying a detaining hold on his lodger.

“By-and-by, as much as you will,” cried the Prodigy, in the highest spirits; “but I cannot stop now to be lectured, dear kind friend!—I must go and look after Becker.”

“I knew where you would be going, and so I came here.—Betty, take your mistress home, and the lantern.—That unfortunate being——”

“I will not hear a word against him to-night, sir!—I know it all by heart,—and I will hear no more of it. I have done,

thank God!—with your Conservatory and its rules and its preachings, and will prefer what friends I please, and be accountable to nobody. I am a man now.”

“You must have what friends God pleases, Charles,” was the grave reply. “If you are a man, you must bear a shock like a man. Don’t go to Becker to-night. There has been a great misfortune. Take my arm, dear boy. . . . I would not tell you now, if you would not hear it from every one in the street. He was only brought home since you went in to the concert,—and they sent for me at once. God forgive me if I have been hard upon him!”

“Not go if anything is wrong?” cried Charles, trying to tear himself loose of the elder man. “Brought home?—Is it some accident?—Is he badly hurt? O, Mr. Orelus, tell me at once. . . .”

“You must hear it sooner or later. He is drowned! . . .” faltered the Rector, much agitated; “it is supposed from cramp in bathing. He bathed every day in the river, I find; and it appears, to-day, later than usual. He told his landlady that he

should be at home in an hour, to dress for the concert. Some people, coming in from the fields, were struck by the sight of clothes on the bank—and looking down into one of the pools, saw something white. His feet had got entangled among the weeds, and his forehead must have struck against one of the fishermen's stakes.—My boy, I knew it would shock you—and I came that you might hear of it from no one else.—It is God's holy will.—May this trial profit you—profit us all,—for we know not who will be the next called!"

"I will go to him!—I will go and see him," sobbed the boy, vehemently. "I *will* not be refused!—If I had not told him to go and dress himself out, when I only wished him to do himself credit, this would not have happened.—I cannot bear it! I will not bear it."

"You *must*, my boy. There is no escape.—But you had better not ask to see him.—Well, if you will, I will not prevent you, and it may impress you, though it give you pain!—I will go with you. There is something that you may be able to tell us,

perhaps. This way . . . hold up, and keep fast hold of my arm.—Good people—let us pass.—This was his favourite schoolfellow. . . Give a light . . .” and they were presently on the dark damp staircase, mounting to the garret story of the shabby house where lay the body of the drowned youth.

Charles had never been, till then, into Becker's chamber ; from an instinct that his friend might be pained were the penury of his habitation to be seen. Poorer to be clean, or more scantily furnished, it was impossible for lodging—even a mean lodging in a small German town—to be. On one side of the narrow bed, where something was stretched, covered with a sheet—hung an old discoloured print of the Mater Dolorosa ; above the pillow, was the profile of a girl, in paltry water-colours, with a few dead flowers in the knot of ribbon which fastened it to the whitewashed wall. The rude deal table at which the student had been used to work, with a coarse lamp hanging over it, was in one corner ; with many papers on it. There was a washing apparatus on the floor, beside a small patched portmanteau ;

and what had been a chest of drawers, in which only two out of the five were left. Becker's clothes were lying in a confused heap by the bed.—This was all.

“We must think what to do. There is no post more to-night. Did he tell you anything about his friends, Einstern?—They lived, I know, at Tübingen;—he had no father or mother, I know; only an uncle—whose name I forget.”

“Semler, a musical composer; but he is mad. There is a Madame Claussen. . . .”

“Here are letters, reverend sir,” said the landlady, who had already shown a ghastly curiosity in rummaging the two drawers, by aid of a master-key.

“You may go,” said the Rector, receiving the packet. “I will take charge of the papers. Did he owe you anything?”

“No, sir—except half a day's rent. He paid his last week and his washing this morning; but I hope I shall be considered, for people do not like taking a room after a dead man has been brought into it.”

While this dialogue was going on, Charles had stolen to the place where the dread

thing lay, and with an effort, such as he had never till then forced himself to make, turned the sheet aside, and for the first time looked on Death.—How the great change ennobled those large, irregular features!—with a calmness on the brow, which even the livid mark across it could not disturb; and with the smile of rest on the white lips!—If the clenched hand extended on the coverlid told of struggle, it told yet more of constancy in the last thoughts of the sleeper; for grasped in the fingers, too tightly to be forced away, was a small gold locket—the only trinket which the poor fellow had been prevailed on to accept from the Prodigy. Within this was curled a long lock of silken hair. The string to which the trinket had been worn had probably been broken in the death-agony.

A storm of silent and bitter tears rained from the eyes of the boy—rebuked by the awful presence of sudden death. “But for them,” Charles said to himself—“but for those cruel people of mine, he might yet have been alive! yet have been happy—yet have been loving and caring for me!”

And with this thought he flung himself on the ground in a tempest of grief.

The Rector raised him softly—melted by an extremity of distress for which he had been unprepared. “Let us hope he is at rest,” said he. “Let us hope that he is where we shall one day meet him! I did not imagine you had loved him so much.”

“You did not know how much I wanted a friend! You did not know how good he was! Nobody did but I.” And out came broken the story, which we have been told—and out came the boy’s own share in its last months, more confusedly still—merely in such hints, of his own befriending purposes, as might clear the memory of the dead from blame and misconstruction.

Every word of it was confirmed by such remains as the deceased left behind him. It was touching to find Becker’s exactly-kept account-book of receipts and expenses—a pittance entered here, for copying music—there, a small sum for accompanying some foreign singer,—or for writing letters, or for balancing a set of books; or for a few German lessons given to some person who

had newly arrived—or for being deputy as an organist—or for correcting proofs—these set off by expenditures so minute as to make it an amazement how life and soul could have been kept together, and body fed and clothed, on such small sums.—The letters, tied up neatly, and worn by frequent reading, were all from the same correspondent—written in a girl's large handwriting, ill expressed, and with small variety of subject;—all breathing a wayward, yet unfaltering expression of love and gratitude to the receiver, such as bespoke entire dependence and trust. The pretty sister had not been afraid of confiding to her only real friend in the world, her little frivolities and vanities.—It did not seem to those who read artless records never meant for their eyes to see, that the prospect of becoming a dancer was quite as fearful to Marie as it was to her brother.—There were unconscious edgings-in of her plans how the two should live together, and spend all the money she was to make, one day;—every now and then, some record of compliment paid to her by this artist—or the other

amateur, who had chanced to see her ;—but the burden was always one and the same. “Be sure, dearest brother—I will live to do you credit, and repay your generous affection.” It was apparent, further, from her simple petitions and requests, that she had no comprehension of the narrow scale of his fortunes. Alas ! the hand was closed, and the heart had ceased to beat, for ever ! —And this had to be broken to the girl.—Death had set in one hour the unpopular, ungainly creature, right. It was now seen that his only fault had been inability quickly to achieve success, under the pressure of burdens which the weaker and more selfish would have thrown off, as beyond their strength to bear.

The night was far advanced ere the old and the young man, so closely brought together by this calamity, left the house of Death. Charles would fain have watched by his friend ; but the Rector overruled this. Becker’s relatives were to be written to ; but, in the mean time, it was necessary to settle the details of the interment.—There were funds enough to have buried

a General, in only the clasp of that diamond bracelet. The poor possessions of the deceased were sealed up;—due orders were given—due watch was set—and the Prodigy went home from his first great triumph, to a sleepless night of impotent tears, and rebellious yearnings, and haughty indignation against his own people, to whose obduracy he ascribed the loss of his friend.—A night so spent, under the laceration of wounds so sharp and sudden, brings small counsel.—He was softened, it is true, towards Rector Orelus; but almost the last link was struck from the chain, feeble as it had been, which had still united him with his own family.

CHAPTER VI.

THE CONSEQUENCES OF TRIUMPH.

EARLY the next morning, two letters were written to Tübingen ;—one to poor Becker's uncle, Semler, in forlorn hope of finding him—the other to his Aunt Claussen.—They had been despatched scarcely a minute, ere the triumphant artist of the preceding night was called on to taste the consequences of his triumph.

The first of these took the form of a severe reprimand from the Managing Directors of the Conservatory.—They were outraged by the manner in which one of its pupils, in place of distinguishing himself, had degraded the establishment, by levying contributions

on noble guests, as if theirs had been a charity school!—For this offence, it was insisted, a public apology must be made in print and presented to the town :—also, that the money collected must be handed over to the town charities. Immediate expulsion was the alternative.

For the hour, the Prodigy had no more wrath in him—only the cold contempt of a man twice his own age.—“I will make no public apology,” said he.—“Why should I?—I will not give up one copper of the money! It is not mine. As to your Conservatory, what has it done for *me*?—I have given it importance!—and one day, it may come to my feet, and remind me that I did so!—This is my answer, Dr. Rottler. I shall not take the trouble of putting it in writing.”—And he laughed a bitter laugh as the door closed on the dumbfounded and silenced official :—then again buried his face in his hands ; but vent was not yet to be given to the paroxysm of bitter distress.—There was another tap at the door. “O patience! Another of those wretched cold-blooded machines!”

No—a visitor was announced, as one desirous of speaking with young Einstern, on a matter of importance.—He came in; a stranger to Charles, —none other than Signor Zuccaglio, the confidential secretary and family physician of the great Russian Prince Alexander Chenzikoff.

“May I speak with you alone—if you are not too much wearied after last night’s excitement to give me your attention?”—said he, in a voice which, though deep, was persuasive and pleasing.

“I am fit for little this morning,” was the answer of Charles, who faintly tried to rally himself. “I had a severe shock, last night, before I came home. My dearest friend”—and here he could not refrain from a new burst of grief—“was drowned while I was at the concert.”

“Was his body found?” asked the visitor, with a quickness which made the Prodigy look up suddenly.

The face he met was expressive but irregular—a certain sinister look being given to it, by a deep scar which crossed the forehead and broke into the left eyebrow.

“Were there any marks of violence? . . . But I beg your pardon,—I have no right to be curious; only these are always things of interest. I am sorry,” continued the speaker, more slowly, “to intrude on you at such a moment; but I am here as the representative of the Prince Chenzikoff; and we go to Dresden in a few hours.—May I ask, on his part, what your engagements are, in the career which you are pursuing so brilliantly?”

“I have, as yet, made none. Last night I consider as merely an experiment—hardly a first appearance.—It was more to serve him who is”

“Impossible! though it may please your modesty to say so, and though where there is so much genius, even you, yourself, may not be able to count on what you have in reserve.—Well, I will not detain you long. The Prince, as you may be aware, is one of the most distinguished amateurs in Europe: and has been the intimate friend and pupil of most of the great musicians.—The Princess plays and sings well, too; though like other of the Russian ladies, she takes it up and

lays it down capriciously. You must have yourself seen, that she feels music."

Charles made some inarticulate reply. His ears heard, but his apprehension hardly received what was said.

"It is impossible," repeated Signor Zuc-caglio, "to exaggerate the admiration your playing inspired last night in her—in both of them, indeed.—The health of the Prince makes it necessary for them to remain stationary and comparatively quiet during some months of the year. He has bought large estates in Austria—and a palace on the Lago di Garda; and they are anxious to have a private chapel, and orchestra of musicians, on the most liberal scale. Will you take charge of such an establishment?—to name your own terms, to be treated as one of the family, and to have four or six months of every year at your own disposal."

"This must be a jest.—I cannot believe" said the boy, trembling from head to foot with gratified vanity.

"On my honour, Herr Einstern, it is serious earnest. The Prince has long been in search of such a person—and would

rather attract young talent to him, than any which is worn out and hackneyed. They had been told much about you, by more than one real judge—and the party of last evening was in a great measure made to enable them to hear for themselves.—As you tell me that you are free, will you consider the proposal, and consult your friends on it?”

“I have no friends—none whom it is worth while to consult. My best friend, who loved me, more than a brother, was lying dead, while I was playing last night.—I cannot think of anything else to-day!—O how delighted he would have been to hear me praised so—and he would have thought I deserved it!—Sir, I cannot answer you, save to thank the noble lady. I feel as if I should never make music again!” and the tears burst out at last; passionately.

The visitor waited—regarding the Prodigy with a singular and scrutinising air of compassion. The boy’s nervous distress was obviously real—and aggravated for the moment, by words of admiration and kindness. At length he ventured to lay his hand (it

was a cold one) on that of Charles. "Well, well," said he, "do not vex yourself to-day, by balancing advantages or disadvantages. The Prince and Princess, I know, would be the last persons in the world to press you, when your heart is sore.—Only, when time has done its work (sooner, possibly, than you can bring yourself to believe), remember that such a proposal is open to you; that it will be made to no one else (to whom, indeed, could one go after you?) until you have considered it, and declined it—I can hardly fancy you unwise enough to do so. You may rely on their keeping their promise—as you might rely on your own parents."

The word pierced the boy like a spear. He suddenly ceased weeping.

"Here," said the visitor, tearing a leaf from his pocket-book, and rapidly writing on it, "are our addresses, for the next nine months. Will yours be still here?"

"No—certainly not.—I shall go, immediately after I shall probably go to Tübingen in Swabia for a while."

"Well, and you see, we shall be at Munich early in December. So that there will be

no difficulty in finding us out.—One last word.—You do not say No?”

“ I do not. . . .”

“ Then I will leave you ;—and I can only wish I had brought an offer of good fortune at a happier time.—Meanwhile, recollect that you have friends ready, whenever you choose to claim them.”

When the boy was left alone, it might have been thought strange by those who have little experience of the life and heart of Genius—that he was made scornful rather than softened by the abrupt, but munificent overtures just laid before him—that he dwelt on the injustice and harsh construction of his own people, rather than on the opening - out of fame, competence ; of a varied and brilliant existence ;—of all that the young most desire. And then, Charles might fancy—for who can put limits to the visions of Genius at his age?—that this was only one of many chances, which must fall into his lap, as matters of course, and not that single opportunity—that flood of the tide in the affairs of men, of which the Poet spoke. Doubts as to his own future

had not, yet, entered into his composition.— But in half an hour, such scorn and surprise, and self-assurance as he may have felt, had already drifted away—and he was again weeping wistfully and with a sadly aching heart, for the poor, faithful, unready creature—lying cold in the midst of his penury—past chance of comfort—past chance of his fortunes being brightened—past chance of recal!

All the deeper was this impression driven by the proceedings of those in office. In revenge for the boy's obduracy, at refusing to apologise for the shame, which they averred, he had brought on the music-school—the authorities forbade their pupil in disgrace to attend the funeral of the one who was to be followed to the grave by his fellow-scholars.—It was in vain that Rector Orelus remonstrated against such a measure of petty vindictiveness as injudicious.—The case had become one of open war; and in proportion as they had winked at past follies, they were now bound to be stern;—the Prodigy's misbehaviour before the King having never ceased to rankle in their minds.

“Forbid me!” was the indignant exclamation. “Am I their schoolboy any more?” and to the great trouble of Charles’s guardian, the boy,—his fellow-students and his masters absolutely giving back before his fixed look—walked first after the coffin, on which a garland had been laid—and behind which went one of those rich and solemn German hymns, sung by feeling manly voices, that give so picturesque a sadness to their burial solemnities. No letter from Tübingen, of course, had come—Charles, therefore, as Becker’s dearest friend, had a right to his place.

The last sight of the Prodigy in the place of the training of his youth, which was seen for many a year to come—was his pale face and flowing hair, lit up by the torches which accompanied the sad procession to the churchyard.

A month later there was to be found no trace of him, save a long letter laid on the desk of Rector Orelus; who read it with a sigh. The boy was gone, and no one had the right to reclaim him.

Three days afterwards it was circulated

in the town—three months afterwards it was fervently believed by those whom every scandal suits,—that the Prodigy, for lawless profligacy of conduct, had been expelled the music-school. Further, its superintendents did not scruple to whisper about, with that true German charity which opens its ears to every manner of evil gossip—that Rector Orelus had secretly connived at his misdeeds in consideration of substantial advantages derived from the son of the rich English Lord.—They began to depreciate—they were not far from hating the Genius,—when their town could derive no more distinction from his presence, and when he had made it clear, that his time of independence had come. What was worse, the good name of his guardian never wholly recovered from the stigma and suspicion cast on it by the falsehood begotten by wounded self-love.—Thus in some worlds are reputations appraised, and is history written.—For the Prodigy it mattered nothing. He was on the wing: out of reach for ever!

CHAPTER VII.

TO TUBINGEN.

THE boy had made no secret of his plans—on which Rector Orelus tried to put a good face by representing that he wished to finish his studies at the University of Tübingen—this increasing the ire of the authorities, who straightway communicated the tale to head-quarters ; in their own worst version.

It was no desire to study, as we know, that urged Charles to drift towards Tübingen ; but a fervid, adventurous fancy of proving his truth to the friend who was gone, by serving the sister left behind.—At his age, those of a sanguine and restless

spirit do not count the cost—do not foresee dragons in the path, or a wilderness, where they have made up their minds to find fairy-land. He was sure of love and welcome from Becker's sister.—He would take care of her and protect her from harm—far more confident of his power and influence, than a man thrice his age, bent on so wild an errand, would have been.—There was an excitement, too, in the journey; akin to that of the feeling which some of the young will understand—the delight of being lost—of perfect, unchecked freedom.—How cheerfully and brightly is their solitude peopled!—Charles had been too long used to dominate to feel any boyish shyness or hesitation.—His was not a case of puerile truancy—it was the precious inspiring entrance into Life, of a pilgrim already prepared by two trials: failure in the love on which he had leaned—and acquaintance with sudden Death!—To only one known living person, and that was Mr. Orelus, did his heart turn with kindness for the time being. He had shut out, he believed for ever, all thoughts of England, with a sternness in which there

was resolute perversity ; for among them he shut out an innocent and faithful friend and playfellow.—Perhaps, even had he recollected Justin, he might just then have undervalued him.—Such love and sympathy as his were to be found by every wayside.—His school comrades had been good fellows, some of them,—but he had shot ahead of them ; and he could think, with a certain amusement, how they would talk ; and could calculate, with more pride than heart-ache, the amount to which he would be missed,—when it was clear that he was gone, and could treat them no more !

Beyond a certain attention excited by his remarkable appearance, the journey of Charles from the north down to Frankfort, and thence into the country of the Minnesingers, was without incident or peculiarity. On the road, however, he had time to work himself up into a fever of eager impatience to arrive—to introduce himself—to begin his task of beneficence by presenting himself as the obliged party. And this, indeed, he was.—He was to find an object of affection, which should make him forget, what

he still *could not* forget!—In a Traveller's Book of a former season which he had turned over in one of the inns, he had found the names of Lord and Lady Caldermere and suite bound for Nuremberg.—How near to him she must have passed; yet she had never called him to her, nor given him a sign of such neighbourhood!—How far was he journeying alone, to serve one whom he had never seen!—The young court the pain of such contrasts: the old turn away from them.

The weather would have made one of a less lively spirit moody. The end of Autumn is nowhere more miserable than in Germany. The shortening days, the fogs that rise late in the morning, and fall before sun-down—the merciless, grey rain-showers have a double gloom in a land where there is no fire-light.—The animal warmth kept alive by the religious exclusion of fresh air, by heavy wrappings, and that great suffocating coffer of sulphureous poison—the stove—is bought (we English think) dearly, by the ignorance of that pleasant companion—the chimney-fire.—Which of us has not been cheered by its beacon flame rising and fall-

ing across some watery moor at nightfall, when no stars are out?—Which of us that has passed middle age has forgotten the good cheer it has kindled in the late grey of a winter's morning, when the freezing journey on the mail-coach was drawing near its end?

Household life is dreary in Germany for want of this solace; yet tired and dazed as he was by having travelled for so many days—dismal as was that weltering October afternoon on which he reached his destination—though he was half sick with hunger—and had his quarters to make out—Charles would wait neither to eat, nor to search for a lodging, nor to unpack—but flinging down his luggage in the first room which the Post offered him, dragged out a dirty stable-man, to show him the way to the Keller house.

This was merely one or two steep streets off:—that usual broad greenish-yellow house, with its gable front, and its multitude of small square windows, common to North and South Germany.—The courtyard had a ruinous well in the middle: over the walls trailed one or two branches of a ragged vine, half torn down, and a few

crimson leaves of a creeping shrub still fluttered. The pavement was weed-grown. The black staircase, in the corner, which gave admission to the upper rooms, was, just then, flooded with water.—Not a light—not a trace of life, was visible.—After beating long and loud with a stick on the balustrades—a shrill cry, “Who is there? What do you want?” made, at last, reply—and a dirty humpbacked woman, with her huge, ill-set features swaddled in a greasy handkerchief, came down—shrieking and surly at having been disturbed while she was washing the staircase.

“Madame Claussen!—Show me¹ where Madame Claussen lives.”

“There’s no such person here!—and nobody is wanted here who belongs to her. We are well rid of them all, God knows!—Go away: go away!”

“But I must know about Madame Claussen,” persisted Charles, trying the exhibition of a gold piece on the Sycorax.—“If she is not living here,—where has she removed to?”

“I don’t know—not I,” was the answer

—a shade less brutally flung out. “They left the place a fortnight ago, in a mighty hurry.—How should I know?—save that they are gone out of the town, and that’s enough for me,—since it rids us of that old pest, too, when he comes back, if he ever comes back—and finds them somewhere else.”

“That is . . . Then Herr Semler was not with them?”

“Not he.—He has not been here for months on months! A great letter came one day—and there must have been money in it—or I should never have got my rent, and then they could not have gone. As it is, they have taken away every scrap they had—and they have still left heaps of things not paid for in the town.—There was bad news in the letter, too.—You could have heard the girl screaming and crying—like the half-mad creature she always was—so far off as the University.—But her aunt lost no time.—They were off by the coach that very evening—to Munich, or Frankfurt, or Paris—who cares?”

“Did they leave no message for Herr Semler?—no letter?”

“Not they!—Who would, I should like to know?—I warrant they were glad enough to give him the slip.—Who is to manage him, when he comes back, I wonder?—I’ll not let him cross the threshold, for one!—I dare say” (and she smiled an ugly smile as she fumbled at the gold piece) “it is not Madame Claussen *you* want, master.—Well, she won’t let her niece go cheap, I promise you. Not one of the students was allowed ever to come near her.—She is being saved up for something better than any such boys as you! But I must get back to my work!—’tis dark enough already.”—And up the stairs and out of sight scuffled that ugly woman; and was forthwith to be heard screaming to some wretched drudge, a couple of stories higher.

This was the long looked-for welcome to Tübingen!

“I should have brought, not sent, the money,” thought the boy.

CHAPTER VIII.

A MERRY CHRISTMAS.

HERE, however, Charles was in Tübingen. What was to be done?—Give up his darling project, built on his one loving affection? Never. Follow Madame Claussen and Marie Becker? — But which way? The police-books stated that they had gone to Stuttgart. His first impulse was to rush after them, in pursuit. But the police-officer represented that to write would do as well: and undertook, for money, to make due inquiries, on the result of which he might proceed.—And now, in the moment of disappointment, such intense and melancholy weariness of practical life had got hold of the Prodigy—and his stock of

money was running so low, that he acquiesced in this proposition, more placably than he would have done ten days ago.—There were other influences, too, at work within him. The spirit of Poetry had been stirred by deepened experience and solitary travel.—There was something he must give vent to—something he must write down.—And so, betwixt fatigue, and a narrowing purse, and busy genius, and a certain feeling of the repulsiveness with which all that he had seen and heard had inspired (let him sophisticate ever so much to conceal it from himself), he decided to wait at Tübingen—till some further clue should present itself.

Then—bright idea!—since that strange Signor Zuccaglio had been so lavish in offering assistance, why not write to Munich, and say—without telling the whole story—that he was very anxious to trace such or such a personage—yet could not himself do so at that moment, being closely occupied as he was over a new Symphony?—This staying, too, in one place would give the indignant lie to those old miscreants at the

Conservatory, who had represented him as a weak, wavering profligate.—He would show them what he could do.—In short, Music was, for the moment, determined to return to her old place. What he had mistaken for exhaustion might be but the importunity of inspiration. He was eager to begin. To work he would set: and did set,—with a vengeance, which those less used to natures like his might have mistaken for steady purpose. But Marie Becker and her brother were not, therefore, forgotten.

Weeks passed away, and brought no tidings from Munich—but in place of them a letter from his mother, who was wintering at Naples,—a letter which made every fibre of his frame quiver with passion, and then chill into adamant. It bore a tone—not of remonstrance so much as of reprimand. They had been apprised of his flight. Charles was roundly ordered to return to the place whence he came; and there to complete his studies. If a suitable apology was made (“make it, *for my sake*,” was written in a hand more faltering than the rest), the

authorities had expressed a willingness to receive the truant again, by way of peculiar favour to Lord Caldermere.

The reception of this futile attempt at control may be divined. This letter, too, was torn to bits, and scattered to the winds. The feeling of stinging pain, however, which it caused, passed comparatively quickly; so far had the estrangement gone, and so earnest and absorbing was the preoccupation of the moment. That his power to imagine, and courage to work out fancies in bold forms, were nerved and deepened by such singular circumstances of early manhood, who can undertake to say? In Music, the amount of unconscious inspiration is vast enough to puzzle the pedants. Mozart was never more loose, lively, and dissipated, than when he was busy over his great morality (as modern transcendentalism has chosen to style it)—“Don Juan.” But the youth was, for the moment, not ill placed, so far as doing himself justice was concerned.—Chance threw him into the hands of one of the best of a worshipful and genial class—that of German innkeepers. It was his

fate to make every one about him loving and anxious to serve him. He had a small provision of money, without drawing on Mr. Orelus, which could suffice for a considerable period. He had no lack of expectations from the labour under his hand—and so long as there remained anything to finish, the days, though solitary days—unnatural to one so social—passed rapidly, and not, on the whole, unhappily.

But this episode came to an end, in the close of his work, at an unlucky period—Christmas-tide. Then it is hard for the strongest or least exacting of men to feel that he belongs to nobody.—Then the Prodigy recurred with something like wistfulness to past merry-makings among his fellow-students—and with self-reproach to the manner in which, out of thoughtlessness, they had laughed at poor Becker for joining in none of their festivities.—Thrown back on his thoughts of the brother and sister, it became natural for him to hover round the precincts from which the latter had disappeared; and from time to time, to ask for news from the Widow Keller, whom he

had smoothed into something like civility.— But she had no tidings, neither of Madame Claussen, nor of her charge. The police-books only recorded traces of them so far as Augsburg. There, it was said, they had been met by friends.

The weather was cold, moist, and gloomy : weather to make a solitary creature, full of nervous sensibility, brood over every bad chance and unpromising omen, and more than ever feel drearily alone.—But for very shame Charles could have wished he was helping Mrs. Orelus to dress the Christmas-tree, with the gold-foil and hard apples, at which he had laughed so mercilessly a twelve-month ago, wondering what good old Gatty would say to such outlandish trash—as a better pastime than roaming like a houseless dog up and down the hilly streets of Tübingen.—Into more than one window did he peep, through which such cheap but hearty preparations for household gaiety might be seen going on ;—into more than one church did he stray, where the poor music and the stiff organ playing, seemed to have acquired a relish and a charm from the associations

of the time.—More than one kindly “Good day” from men muffled to the chin, and reeking with bad tobacco, from round scarlet-faced burgher women, did he return; with hardly dry eyes.—It was the one only period of his life during which he felt keenly that he might have been rashly presumptuous in asserting his independence.

“Even that horrible old Keller woman is going to have her tree,” said he, as he followed into the court-yard the poor drudge of the house, carrying a scrubby bush, which had, to all appearance, outstood its market.

But there was something else in the court-yard;—a man:—and the wrath of the shrew made it clear—past doubting—who that man must be.

“Out! you madman!—Out! you disgrace!—Out! you miserable vagabond!—I like your daring to come and beg here! Where are my ten gulden? Your folk are gone, I tell you; and have taken everything with them—your books and all.—Pack after them, and find them if you can!”

The object thus addressed was a lament-

able spectacle. His greasy old cap, with the peak half torn off, had been made for a smaller head; and his thick wild grey hair streamed out from beneath it on his shoulders.—He had no shirt to cover his shaggy, naked chest—his coarse shoes, ripped into rags, hardly hung about his feet. But it was the face that made the terror; it was the features, originally as grand as those of some Greek bust, distorted, brutified, overgrown with filthy hair,—it was the fierce, restless, red eyes,—which were more fearful far than those signs of abject degradation and misery.—The poor wretch was appealing to the angry woman with a piteous humility which encouraged her ire to blaze all the fiercer and louder. “Not a crust, I tell you!—Not a drop of water!—If you harbour here an instant longer, I’ll have the constables!—Get out!”

The vagabond gave back and turned, as preparing to go away—like one broken, body and mind, with fatigue and misery.

“Is it not Mr. Semler?” said Charles, approaching him timidly. “Are you Mr. Semler?”

“Yes,—yes!—Professor Semler is my name! I know you! I have met you somewhere—but I cannot recollect who you are.”

“We have never met, sir, I believe;—but your nephew was a dear friend of mine: we were in the same music-school. My name is Einstern!”

“What!” cried the other, springing on Charles with all the force of sudden frenzy, and clutching his collar with both hands so violently, that the cloth rent. “What! have I caught you at last? You villain! You thief! You murderer! You impostor! Am I Semler? Yes! I am Semler! and you shall know what it is to have to reckon with Semler!—I am not quite beggared, thank God!—I am not yet hunted to death, for I have strength enough to make an end of twenty such miserable insects as you! Try to escape! do!—Master gentleman! master hypocrite! I have you fast,—and you shall know what that means! Come along with me!”

“Help! Help!” cried the youth aloud, resisting to the utmost of his strength,

so soon as he could recover breath, after a sudden blow on the face which filled his eyes with blood. "Mrs. Keller! Call for help! He is mad! He will murder me!—I have done him no harm!"—And on this the Keller woman, trying to fling herself between them, but in vain, began to scream with all her might.—But the maniac was louder.

"Done no harm!—you liar!—Who taught my boy to drink—(Liquor's a devil!)—in order to get him punished, and to keep him back,—when he got a prize, and began to make more money than you had. You an English Lord's son! I know all about you, you bastard!—Who lived upon him? Who borrowed from him? Who stood by and saw him drowned for want of help?—I know yet more about you, Master Ein-stern!—Take that! and that!"—and with each word fell another brutal blow, hardly leaving the boy strength or reason to scream, or to struggle. A greyhound might as well have attempted to get clear of the gripe of a tiger.

"Ay! you genius you!—and another time,

when you are displaying yourself before great ladies, and kissing their hands, and coaxing their bracelets from them,—you shall make free with Semler's property. And you shall lay your thief's hands on his music, and you shall pass it off as your own, and you shall rob him of his credit! It is such as you who ruin us! who drive us mad! I was respectable once, and once wore as fine a mien, and as grand a watch, as you. But it is my turn now! I'll make an end of your pianoforte playing for ever and a day. I'll break every finger you are worth!"

The maniac had now the boy on the ground, holding his arms fast, and with his knee on his chest. The last thing that Charles could recollect was thinking a prayer.

CHAPTER IX.

THREE LETTERS.

SOME fortnight of dangerous fever elapsed before sense and recollection came back, and with them, at first, a terror so intense, as to amount to a new feature in the disease. The patient was hardly to be persuaded that the fearful old man was not lurking somewhere—ready to reappear to tear him in pieces: and not until candles were kept lighted in every corner of the sick-room did he dare to fall asleep. “I shall wake in the dark,” he thought, “and he will be there, and I shall not be able to see him, or to protect myself.”

“Comfort yourself,” one day said a quiet

and kindly Englishman's voice at his ear. "He can harm you no more.—This is the real truth.—You have not been left alone an hour since I came to you. You are much better—out of danger now—and only weak. Your strength will soon come back, if you will not excite yourself."

For a while the truth produced its soothing effect.—The boy, who had only just escaped from death, or worse (so fearful had been the injury), could not at first summon energy, nor thought to ask by whom he was tended. When the evening drew on, the horror came back, but in a less violent form. — A night and another day brought a great change for the better.—Charles could recollect where he was—neither in Blackchester, nor in the music-school—he could inquire how long he had been ill.—He was aware that the kind woman who bustled in on a stout pair of legs, to bring him nourishment, was neither dear old Gatty, nor Mrs. Orelus: he could take notice of the hand that smoothed the bedclothes tossed about by his restlessness. He tried to draw it near his eyes. "That is Greek on the seal,"

he said. "Alas! Daphne! Why, Colonel Vandaleur! this must be a new dream! We are not going to Ostend."

"No dream!" said the gentleman thus addressed. "I am glad to find your memory so strong. Now lie still: and perhaps I shall be able to tell you more, to-morrow. I am living in this town now, and will take care of you."

The invalid held the hand fast, and with it, a sense of security; dropped back presently into a placid sleep, and awoke refreshed, convalescent,—no longer hag-ridden by frightful imaginations. "How is it, if you are living here, sir," he could say to the kind and humane friend who was sitting by the window, reading in the winter sunlight when he awoke, "that I never knew of it before?"

"Because I had been absent on a journey—I only came from Vienna two days before Christmas-day—and it was by accident that, on calling here to inquire if any letters had been left for me while I was away, they told me how ill you were. If you have not forgotten the Greek on my ring, I had not

forgotten the name of the boy in the velvet coat who could read it.—I have heard of you more than once since, but I did not think we should meet in this way.”

It was a day or two, before out of little colloquies such as this, Charles made out the simple truth—that Colonel Vandaleur, for the sake of consulting some manuscripts in the library, had been a resident in the Swabian town for some months—that on his sister’s leaving to take the veil in a Flemish convent, he had thrown himself into antiquarian pursuits—glad of an object in life. To judge from his manner of talking, Charles might have done him a favour by having been all but murdered, and desperately ill in consequence—facts which, conjointly with the Prodigy’s curiously lonely plight, seemed to have established a right of property in him with the Colonel;—who was a humorist even in benevolence, and was only helpful and kind without an effort to attractive people. He had told but the truth, in saying that he had never forgotten that brilliant child with his long curling hair; had been as pertinacious as a woman, in now resist-

ing its being cut short ; and made Charles smile his first smile by describing how he had withstood the doctor ; nay, and the barber too, when he was actually in the field of action, shears in hand ! But he had written to two or three persons to acquaint them with the serious accident.—Letters in answer were lying among the boy's papers.—On the next day, if things went well, Charles should read them.

“ But I must ask questions, if I must not read. Where is ? . . . ”—and the look of terror which glanced over the pale face, for a second, filled the blank.

“ In merciful hands,” was Colonel Vandaleur's reply—“ in an asylum for the insane at Stuttgart.—It is thought that he will not recover—and not live long. He is already quite quiet, never speaks, and knows nobody. My boy, you may thank God that the neighbours came in. A moment more, and it would have been too late ! ”

The first letter which Charles tore open, in spite of injunctions to patience, was from Munich. The Russian party had been detained on the road, but on arrival had lost

no time in making every inquiry for the person mentioned in Einstern's letter. It had been till now in vain. When would he come to them?

"Colonel Vandaleur," said the boy, disregarding, as was his use, the latter half of the letter, "if you have been living here for any time, you must have known that wretched being from whom I so narrowly escaped: you must be able to tell me something about his niece, — Marie Becker. — Was she very beautiful? Her brother used to say she was."

The English gentleman answered very drily. He had seen her, and she was a showy sort of girl: at least, he supposed the students would think so. To his judgment, she was too flaunting and coquettish; but who could wonder, considering what manner of people had brought her up? — The woman with her was known to have been the mistress of a noble Austrian. In fact, the Keller house bore a bad reputation. No respectable one would have harboured so disorderly a lodger as Semler.

Nothing could jar on the invalid's ear

more harshly than such a plain tale as this. He said that his fever was coming back. It was only temper. Colonel Vandaleur ought not to have invented such things. It must be scandal and uncharitableness. The other, however, returned innocently to the subject : told how the girl had been dressed out—how a young Prince—suspected to be in danger, and who had been inveigled by Madame Claussen into daring to dance with Marie at a public ball—had been removed from the University by his parents in alarm. “I dare say they are gone after him, if the truth were known. She was said to have a brother somewhere.—I wonder he did not take better care of her, if she had. Probably, they are all alike.”

“O no ! no !” cried Charles, eagerly—and told, as well as he could, all that he knew about Becker : his poor struggles, his anxiety about his sister’s well-doing,—his untimely death.

“Well !” was the reply—“it may be as you say ;—and since he seems to have been the only one among them good for something, you are well rid of the rest.—They

are a bad tribe, that sort of people, take my word for it!—foolish, selfish, extravagant, ungrateful; though—for that matter” (here the speaker seemed to be thinking aloud) —“everybody is ungrateful.—Well, never mind; one must get along as well as one can—expect nothing, and care for no creature but one’s self.”—By way of suiting the action to the word, he was just then arranging the pillows of the boy’s easy-chair with the assiduous delicacy of a woman.

“You are not speaking the truth,” said Charles, affectionately; and he thought within himself, by the aid of the strictest logic—“so I won’t believe all that he says about her!”

The next letter put into Einstern’s hands was longer and less exciting: from Rector Orelus.—After much small news—how such a scholar had won a prize for elocution—and such another for counterpoint; how a fire had broken out in Furrier Fleischmann’s garret; how the learned Doctor Pobel, the ichthyologist, had arrived to honour the town with a solemn visit, *et cætera*—“My dear boy,” went on the writer, “you are beloved

and missed in this house.—Cannot you come back to us? Are not your faults and your follies safer in my arms (you know I was never severe with you!) than when they are flung out on a strange pavement, for every enemy or policeman to pick up?—Those of an opposite tendency to me have misrepresented me, because I always do, and because I always will, take your part. But never mind; I do not mind—only come back to us, at least till you are a little older. The house is so dull without your piano.

“My wife bids me to tell you that Miss Minna Twiese (the Burgomaster’s daughter, you recollect) is an object of envy among our young ladies here. She has got, she says, one of the gloves you wore that great night when you played with such memorable concurrence, and which you dropped in the orchestra. She covered it with her foot till you were gone;—will not give the least morsel of it to anybody—and has worked a pocket-book with her own hair, in which she proposes to keep it as a relic. She will be very rich, being an only child, —and is a true soul.

“ Before I close this, I must put you on your guard : something remarkable having happened which ought not to be concealed from you.—Not long ago, the uncle of the poor deceased Becker—Professor Semler, a musical composer—appeared in this town, having accidentally, he said, heard of the sudden fate of his nephew ; and wishing to claim all that he left behind him—including some musical manuscripts of value, which Semler had granted him, to assist in his studies. He was convinced with great difficulty (being always angry—and, some say, not in his senses) that everything belonging to the unlucky youth had been sealed up, and sent to Tübingen. His companions here were very bad and strange. He was always with Meshek ; and when the latter was expelled from the town, for some of his evil practices, Semler accompanied him. May they do no mischief !”

Such was the substance of the epistle from Rector Orelus.—It was dated Christmas-eve.—Much might have fallen out differently, but for his true German procrastination—had he written earlier.

Days went on, and the youth and the middle-aged man—older than his years—became true friends: in spite of great differences that grew into importance with the Prodigy's reviving strength. Unfortunately for Colonel Vandaleur's hold on the boy, Nature had denied him the slightest musical gift. He could not distinguish "God save the King" from "Batti, batti;" and, though anxious to recommend himself, could not feign interest in pursuits which wandered so wide of his sympathies. The old-fashioned English idea which prevailed so universally at the commencement of this century, that so lovely an art was unworthy the attention of a man—had fallen into a congenial soil. He felt that the boy was in earnest, but, in the secret of his heart, regarded the other's genius much as a civilised thinker regards the fanatical religion of a savage. To this deficiency in organisation, again, Charles referred no small part of the disesteem in which he held Becker's sister. She was Semler's niece; an appendage to a mad and disreputable musician. There was no good possible in such a being. The elder man

had no idea how much pain this short-coming caused to his companion ; how the perpetual effort at suppression crippled the boy in making the confidences which would otherwise have been so relieving and so salutary. With the gratitude of Charles, a feeling of imprisonment was mixed. He enjoyed Vandaleur's recollections of bygone days and people—had taste enough to appreciate all that was honourable in the other's tone of thinking ; but he yearned for some one who would let him talk about his Symphony.

“ You suit me exactly,” would Vandaleur say, “ except in Well, well, youngsters will all have their weaknesses ; and yours will pass, let us hope. Gad, sir ! I remember the time when I should have thought it impossible to live four-and-twenty hours without a pair of horses—at least my hunter and my roadster—both worth looking at ; and what could be more natural in a spirited young man, brought up, as I was, to believe I was heir to one of the finest fortunes in the county ? Even my sporting friends used to make game of me for the

lengths I went to.—They still talk of me as Canterbury Vandaleur, at White's.—Canterbury was worth the money I spent on him.—Gad, sir! I'm not going to nourish your extravagance by telling you the figure.—If they had not lamed him with their foul play,—pretty dear they had to pay for that!—he would have beaten Flying Childers. And . . . What happened?—Why, I found myself one morning cut off without a shilling; so there was an end of my little weakness.—No more Canterburying for your humble servant! Of course, it was a devil of a twinge at first; to be broken up and sold off, and thrown back on a few hundreds a twelvemonth, at thirty-five, when my debts were all paid.—But before a couple of years were out, I could face London again, on two feet instead of four.—And now, when I am in England, I can potter about and look at the equipages and the Guardsmen in Rotten Row, without a single qualm. What's a weakness, after all? You'll tire of your pianoforte playing before you are twenty-five, and wish you had

taken to something more like a man's occupation."

"It's impossible, I know, to make you conceive," Charles was beginning, with some heat. . . .

"Piano! piano! to use your own language, or we shall have our pulse up,—and that I can't permit; because I mean to look after you for a while. I want some one to care about, since Agatha has thought fit to leave me. You would be all the better for some older person beside you.—I have hardly a relation in the world. What say you?—I have a few hundreds to leave—not to speak of my manuscript on the 'Inconsistencies of German Military Discipline, Ancient and Modern.'—Gad! I have not written a line since Christmas-day—and we are now far on into January. How time flies, when a man has anything real to do!"

A second offer of protection! and one which the good angel at Charles's ear whispered was sounder, if less brilliant, than the Russian proposal under suspense—and

more possible to entertain than a love-traffic with the apple-faced and true-souled Miss Twiese!—But the idea of any yoke being intolerable, had become something like a settled fancy and principle. He laughed off the necessity of any immediate reply, beyond earnest thanks in which there was no mockery.

But Colonel Vandaleur, for a man who had no music in his soul, could be as pertinacious as his betters. He was more and more engaged by the Prodigy—because of his very inequalities of nature; and a shut-up heart, none of the best portions in which were dilapidated, opened strangely to the bold and lively touches of youth and genius. Though the juncture was one in which his own private affairs gave him cause for thought and suspense, it was an uppermost fancy with him to attach Charles to him permanently.—With the tenderness of a thorough gentleman, he forbore pressing for any details of the events which had cast so foolhardy a sailor, so young, on the rough ocean of life, without compass, comrade, or captain; but he listened and re-

tained eagerly all that the other volunteered to tell. Under the humanising influence of the elder man's presence, the boy's reserve gave way; especially in those moments of depression which, with him, were as many as his moments of hopeful exaltation.—So that Charles—not in one, or two, or ten broken narratives—made his friend aware that he was alone in the world.—He had a brother: but who cared nothing for him—a rich, prosperous, upright fellow: too fond of ordering and of laying down the law. When Charles spoke of his father-in-law, it was with a vehement, almost a menacing, bitterness.

“You did not dream of a father-in-law that day when we travelled across Belgium together?” was Colonel Vandaleur's natural comment on some speech in which the Prodigy had let his aversion be seen more clearly than usual.—He never spoke willingly of his mother.

“No;—it was not till we got to *that* England that she was beguiled from me by Lord Caldermere. Forgive me, Colonel Vandaleur, I forgot it was your country—

but then, don't you see, you are too good and real a man to live in it !”

What was it in this speech that made Colonel Vandaleur suddenly start up from his chair, with a frown on his face ?—Charles fancied it the disrespectful mention of England,—but his friend put the anxiously repeated apology aside, with a hurried “ No, no ! . . . you have not hurt me ! I should not care if I never were to see England any more, only . . . My boy, there may prove to have been something besides chance in our meeting !”—And letting go the hand he had grasped, with more emotion than he had been till now seen to show, the Colonel left the room suddenly.

“ I cannot think, I cannot speak of those people yonder, it seems,” said the Prodigy, passionately, when left alone, “ without raising a storm. What can any of them be to Colonel Vandaleur ; since it was not because I hate England that he was so much hurt ?”

The effect, whatever might be the cause, remained. When they met again, the manner of the elder man was as kind as possible—

kinder than ever, if that could be,—but constrained. He measured every word—yet talked on, so as to render the most distant return to the recent private history of either impossible. That night, in place of, as usual, urging early hours as indispensable to the convalescent, he lingered, and kept Charles up late, telling him Indian adventures, and old love passages: for Colonel Vandaleur had been handsome, inflammable, and one of those irresistible men who never get married. “Neither will you, my boy, I foresee—with that heart, like a grate full of tinder, ready to catch fire. Why, the candles are going out.—Well, good night, and God bless you! I have to be up early in the morning.”

In the morning, no Colonel Vandaleur was to be found in Tübingen. “My boy,” said a note, given to Charles when he woke, “you saw my disturbance yesterday, I am sure. It is necessary for me to go to England with the least possible delay; and I hate taking leave. But don’t think you are off our bargain, for this. On the contrary, let me say gravely in parting, that I feel to you as

if you were a child of my own : and hope you will walk after me to my grave. Keep your high spirit till we meet again. I shall write to you often : you must write to me and never, whatever you do, whom ever you are thrown amongst, forget that you are a gentleman. “ A. V.

“ P.S.—But don't close with the Russian offer. Such sudden and violent fancies never come to good.”

Rarely has there been a letter received communicating more vague uneasiness, though telling so little. “ This is not all,” said Charles to himself, again and again, as he roamed up and down the streets of the town like a bewildered animal, hardly able to convince himself that his kind friend was indeed gone—in and out of the court of the Keller house, with a sort of fascination, as if some terrible thing might be met with there,—not satisfied until he had assured himself at the Post of Colonel Vandaleur's having departed at four in the morning. “ This is not all ! Why should he be so secret ? If he *did* feel to me as to a child of his own . . .” But the sudden well-known

sting cut that train of soliloquy short.—What were parents and children and their feelings, to one outlawed like himself?—And a dark hour came on—darker than usual—with strange shapeless presentiments, and a dreary sense of utter abandonment.—He must rouse himself—he must not stay there, brooding over wrongs and disappointments, while his desires in Art were unsatisfied. There was no more Tübingen for him, now that Colonel Vandaleur was gone, his health restored, and his Symphony finished. He hated the town almost as much as if it had been Blackchester.

Before the end of the week he was in Munich. Colonel Vandaleur's postscript, with its cautions, had been, possibly, imprudent—certainly a trifle inconsistent with his own proceedings.

PART THE THIRD.

EMANCIPATION.

CHAPTER I.

DREAM MOUTH.

BEFORE venturing farther into the storm—it being idle to delude those who interest themselves in this voyage, with prospects of settled weather—they shall be put back to shore, for a moment, to hear what Time had done for a stranger, woven seven years ago into the web of the Prodigy's life—woven as inextricably there, as if the two had slept in the same cradle, and had learned to read off the self-same book, and had all their family hopes and fears and catch-words in common,—in place of their having merely been flung

together by chance for a few weeks, followed by an interval of entire disunion ;—at least for one of the two.

The boy of the velvet coat, who had bullied Cousin Gatty, and puzzled Mr. Ogg, her trustee, and bearded the monster of Bower Mills on his own domain, might, it is true, lightly recollect, and no more, the little grey girl who had sat with him in the thick grass of Caldermere Park, and who was sent away from home to be put beyond reach of his sorceries—but those days on the Lower Pavement, acted over and over again in her banishment,—decided much — everything—for that little grey girl, who had few bright things to remember:—and whose nature it was to love all that is bright.

Then Susanna's was such an exile!—The excellent woman to whose wardenship she had been confided—a quiet, patient, pains-taking creature—was one, in comparison with whom her parents were marvels of enlightenment and liberality:—and not merely because they had somewhat more of vigour and geniality in their natures,—but because they lived overlooking a town, with manu-

factories that smoked, and a viaduct crossed by railway trains—whereas Aunt Barton had years ago “centred down” in a cottage at Drearmouth,—a village among the Sands, which had tried, even as Blackchester had done, to become a frequented watering-place, but had failed utterly—without manufactures or railway enterprise or intercourse, to redeem its failure.—It bore the name of being salubrious, but the monotony of Death was on it: and more than one adult invalid had pined away there, it may be believed, out of the sheer, hopeless, gentle dulness of his place of exile.—Children—children whose parents were going to take holiday abroad,—were sent there by dozens; but their nursery-maids had a desperate habit of making their way some twenty miles across to Ribton (not, it is to be hoped, in consideration of the barracks there);—and one German governess, who was in charge of six small Quillseys—had absolutely fixed a day for trying to drown herself (not a very easy matter on that flat shore, where the tide goes out for half a mile)—as was proved by a letter forgotten among her

curl-papers, in the joyful haste of an unexpectedly premature summons back to town.

There was a church, to which only about two men, and those old ones, entered; in addition to the curate and his clerk.—But Susanna was never permitted to set foot in the church, though there was no organ.—The clerk, Mr. Paddox, was also the book-seller and stationer at Drearmouth (with a case of French beads and artificial flowers, which had never been opened in the memory of man), and kept the Post-Office.

This withered old composition of dry sticks and parchment,—who habitually chid every child that was not active enough to escape him, became the one living object of interest in Drearmouth for the lonely girl—famishing for want of occupation to her mind.—He had two talismans of attraction for that strange, shy, earnest creature.—One was a sorrow of some years' standing—the other the wrecks and ruins of a circulating library—long since bought second-hand—and removed to Drearmouth, together with the French wares. The promise of the place flourishing, which had led to

these dashing speculations, had never been fulfilled: and their owner had mildewed away, from the time when his only relative, a brother engaged on a gentleman's estate in a distant county, had made a discreditable flight to America. Since then, Harry Paddox had not been heard of.—Aunt Barton had this story much on her mind; and as her brother and sister Openshaw were understood to be meditating a religious visit to the United States, was not without hope but that this prodigal Paddox might be discovered by them, and brought back to England under the shelter of their wing,—when they went.

But Rome was not built in a day, and many a weary month had Susanna sat on the two benches of the beach at Drearmouth, trying to sing by heart every tune the Prodigy had taught her, and to repeat to herself the verses she had learned; and trying, vainly, to make companions of the Quillsey children, in their stiff silk frocks,—ere she ventured into the frequent habit of buying a sheet of paper at a time at the shop: for while Mr. Paddox was making it up,

grumbling as he did so, she could peep into the neglected books in the back shop—and sometimes one happened to be lying open on the counter. When this was the case, she was artful enough never to stir from the spot till she had read every word on the page; and once or twice, with the tremulous hand of a trespasser, managed to turn the leaf, with a view to a future visit. It was months (*can* Time go so slow with the young, in England, now-a-days?) ere her stratagem was detected by old Paddox inquiring, in his crustiest manner, why “she could not buy a quire of paper at once, and not come there giving trouble day after day. It would cost her less.”—She had nearly got through half a volume of “Terebintha, or the Hut on the Apennines” — with an immaterial skip or two, caused by missing leave—but having reached a crisis at which the heroine’s lover, Florindor, the young Prince of Ravenna, was lowered into a vault, with a pitcher of water, a death’s-head, and a mouldy loaf, by a cruel cousin; on the very midnight when his presence was most urgently expected by the lady in her

bower—even Susanna grew bold in the exigency of that thrilling suspense: and the dark conspiracy she had been carrying on for months was revealed to open day.—“She did so much wish to know what became of the lovers. Might she, just for once, as a great favour, read a little in ‘Terebintha?’”

The old man put on his spectacles with positive wonderment, to take a look at the still, but rather rosy girl, who had been feeding on his stores of mouldy romance so surreptitiously. “Ay, you are a queer one,” he said gruffly, but not ill naturedly, “and have wild blood in your veins! All Quakers have that are good for anything. Take the book home with you, little maid, if you care to look at it.” And thus was a strange sort of acquaintance began; and a strange course of cultivation was entered on,—with, Heaven knows! little of Chapone, or Ord, or Fordyce in it—applied to a soil which was as tinder ready for the spark.

Between these hidden soundings into the trash and treasure of an old circulating library —and hidden recollections which

came back with a brightness, prophesying some day or other a return to pleasures of a like kind—the next two years of the girl's life (eventful ones) passed. Matters did not go smoothly on the Lower Pavement. Young Openshaw was turning out wild: frequenting race-courses in disguise. Her father and mother were about undertaking that missionary visit to America, which was to discover and reclaim Paddox the delinquent, among other obvious blessings to be effected.—She was not wanted at home—had placidly slipped out of the care of her parents as an object of habitual interest. She began to wonder whether all her life was to pass in this strange, useless, brooding inactivity. The wonder ended, as many other wonders end—unexpectedly.

“There is a lady at The Dolphin,” said Paddox, one morning, when the maiden repaired to her fountain of delight, after a sleepless night spent over “St. Leon”—“a lady who has had an accident.”

The Dolphin was the one hotel, by courtesy, at Drearmouth;—and few were those who harboured there,—so that the an-

nouncement was worth having, by way of an event. But there was the man who had the Philosopher's Stone, and the Elixir of Life, doomed to death by fire in the Inquisition.—What was any lady at The Dolphin in comparison with him?

“A bad carriage overturn, they say, it was, on the road to Rashford—and as she is not to move for some weeks, and to be kept quite quiet, and in a dark room, and as this is nearer than Ribton, here they brought her.—She is moped to death, and wants some one to read aloud to her.—I doubt if any one can read aloud in Drearmouth—but me and Mr. Breed—and he's well-nigh past it.—You speak prettily, and don't sing your words like those Quakers mostly. She will give you five shillings an hour.”

It will, by some, be thought inconsistent in one who had been two minutes before so deep in the encounter of the Magician and the Dominican spy—whose excitement in the tale was to be seen in the livid circles round her eyes—that she should be able to ask, “Who the lady was, and what was her

name?" But those of her sect are brought up to be in many things curiously accurate.

"Westham is her name; she is a widow lady of large fortune—no, Westwood—Countess Westwood.—Her servants told Miss Avery, at the Dolphin—that she has no settled home,—always travelling about."

"I have heard the name before, I believe," she said, quietly. "The odd combination with the title makes me recollect it."—Ah! it was not the title,—but because among other of her treasures of memory, was the Prodigy's tale of the handsome lady and the half-drowned man on the Dyke at Ostend.

"Well, will you, miss?" said the old man, handing her the third volume.

It lay for a moment unnoticed.—"I dare say I need not have to mention it," thought she within herself—glancing rapidly at the fact, that the existence of "Terebintha" and the "Castle of Hardayne," and the great "St. Leon," was unsuspected by the excellent aunt to whose sedative care she had been entrusted. Take heed, ye who would force your own bits and bridles on others, and

rise up early, and late take rest!—The girl had learned concealment as a self-defence.—“I can but try,” she said at last to Mr. Paddox—“and I *will*,” she added to herself,—“even if my parents were to send for me from Drearmouth because they find out that I have been sitting with a sick person. But they will not hear of it in America.”

And this was where and how Susanna Openshaw was brought under the notice of the Countess Westwood.

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CHAPTER II.

A RESTLESS WOMAN.

THOUGH the fact be as hotly contested as is every other inconvenient truth, there are such beings in the world as restless women: dismal as a spectacle when they are poor and exacting; troubling, when they are rich and generous—in the first case, women who will ramble over the Continent, even in old age, forcing themselves everywhere, leaning heavily on distressed and civil males, without invitation for the most part—querulously communicative regarding great unseen family connexions—and particularly difficult to satisfy at hotels.—But the women in the second category are even

less easy to deal with: because they are less disagreeable and take up greater space.—These are the great ladies, who, for the dear love of excitement, push themselves into places of risk, that they may see a siege, or enjoy a scramble over barricades—to whom diving bells—balloons—the curiosities of Bedlam,—the cold and ghastly tragedies enacted outside Newgate, are more welcome, because more pungent, than balls, or races, or *battues*:—and who defend their desire to indulge, as amateurs, the strongest emotions which crime, and peril, and suspense, and terror can excite, on the argument, that “Every one ought to see everything.”

The Countess Westwood was not one of those extreme specimens of the class who give trouble to ambassadors, staff-officers, and magistrates, and come home in a state of triumph and enchantment to relate their adventures, considering themselves, somehow, as among the benefactors to their species:—but she was restless:—in part, perhaps, because she had few ties and duties, being a widow, childless, and unen-

cumbered by near relations; yet was, for ever, urged with the desire of benefiting others by her fortune, and her position. A strange, not an uncommon, compound of unselfishness and vanity, her pleasures were not like those of other people—but were taken up and laid aside, with a suddenness, not to say caprice, which she herself was the first to own and to laugh at.—“But what does it matter?” she would say—“I am alone in the world.”

This year, her indulgence had been driving herself in an open carriage across England, by out-of-the-way roads—and she was far on her way to Plymouth, there to take ship for foreign parts—when the accident which compelled her to “put into” that stagnant sea-side village befel her. The consequences, though not serious, bade fair to be tedious—but she would have no distant friend summoned.—“If I battle it out by myself,” she said, “I shall get away all the sooner, and I could be of no use or amusement to any one, as I am.”—But the hours hung heavily. The wash of the sea on the shingle, which seemed to be for ever

in the darkened room, where she lay on a sofa, stiffening herself up to wear the day out patiently—became exasperating in its monotony:—and the tidings that some one had been fished out who could read to her, were, under such circumstances, received almost as eagerly as the news of an eruption of Vesuvius, or a successful rising among the Poles, would have been.

Nothing so quaint as Susanna had, till then, crossed her path; the manners and customs of the world of dissenters being as entirely unknown to a large portion of English society as those of the natives of the Tonga Islands. So much shrewd self-reliance, mixed with so much deep, earnest affection and enthusiasm, were a rarity and a study. To hear the girl talk was more amusing than many books;—she had made so much for herself out of opportunities and chances of enjoyment which would pass wholly unnoticed by others brought up more liberally. The reading aloud, though her voice was musical and her pronunciation accurate, was, at an early stage of the business, interrupted in favour of question

and answer. Susanna's life and experiences were soon told; and this over, she was drawn on by the encouraging kindness of the great lady to question in her turn.—“So much *you* have seen” (it was hard work to drop the “*thou*” as a first step towards emancipation), “that to hear you is more interesting than the best book in James Paddox his library.”

“Paddox!” said the Countess, hastily—“what an odd name! Where can I have heard it? O! I remember, at Ostend.—The wretched, half-drowned emigrant, who wanted to get off to America,—his name was Paddox.”

“Was that the poor man on the Dyke, please?—Charles Einstern used often to talk of you—and yet he was not like me—but had been everywhere, and enjoyed all manner of advantages, and had noticed many beautiful ladies.”

“Why, little girl, how oddly people seem turning up!—What did you know about the Einsterns, and that slatternly mother of theirs?”—In answer to this, Susanna had to tell, in part, the story of those

halecyon weeks on the Lower Pavement ;— only in part, though ; doing all she could to recommend her playfellow, by description of his genius—his gracious qualities—and his beautiful face.—“ Such a face ! It was an angel’s ! ”

But, like other restless women, the Countess had small toleration for any restlessness save her own—and was not ready for any favourites save those of her own choosing.—“ I remember the party well,” she would say, “ and the eldest brother ;—an excellent, unselfish creature, I am sure, whom they made a drudge of !—Susanna, my child, take my word for it, prodigies and people of genius are always selfish.”

Susanna reddened ; for she believed nothing of the kind.

Slight as was the bond of this topic, the two names mentioned, however, drew the pair together.—The aged relative whose life had resolved itself into a minute care of her own health, was past interfering ;—dreamed little what was passing in the darkened room at The Dolphin, and would not have under-

stood it, had it passed in her presence. Countess Westwood's recovery was protracted; and her companion, who was growing tall, was growing pale also.—The elder woman, on emerging from her imprisonment, offered to treat her to some change—and consent to the same was apathetically given.—The title had a great power over Susanna's aged guardian; even though she had one foot in the grave.—The two were to spend six weeks in Normandy together, and afterwards the girl was to be deposited at Drearmouth.

But the holiday did not end according to its plan. Susanna was sought out in the heyday of its enjoyment, by tidings which a few stormy days had detained on their way.—There was no longer a home at Drearmouth for her. The feeble flame of life there had gone out.—The aged, quiet woman had expired so placidly during the night, that the hour of her departure was unknown. She had been attended to her grave by distant relations; those nearest to her, Susanna's mother and father, being in

America. Her income being an annuity, had died with her.—What was to be done?

“What is to be done, for the moment at least, is clear,” said the restless lady, secretly anything rather than distressed by an event which made her companion grave, but not sorrowful.—“You must give me the great pleasure and comfort of your company till you can hear from America.”

CHAPTER III.

EARS AND EYES AT BADEN-BADEN.

IT is the fate of certain places, as of certain beauties, to become draggled in reputation, before they lose their good looks.—Such a place is that lovely spot on the edge of the Black Forest,—Baden-Baden—which, year by year, has sunk lower and lower,—its follies become more and more violent, its vice coarser and coarser ; till there has been no small danger of even well-bred Iniquity abandoning it to all that is most flaunting and vile and scheming ;—to shapes, which if met with on the terrible London pavement—and in the yet more terrible temples of Gin, would strike terror into the hearts

of every delicate woman, and touch with a deep concern that of every thoughtful man.

The downfall has been rapid. — When Lord and Lady Caldermere halted there, however, for a short sojourn, as they turned towards England from a solemn and barren continental journey,—a measure arranged by the gentleman under pretext of gratifying Lady Caldermere,—in reality to see if the waters could do anything for health, which the obstinate man would not confess was failing the lady—there was, no doubt, abundance of spurious Fashion, and that cautious Virtue, which is virtually so different an article from the reality, be its double gilding ever so resplendent;—there was play as reckless and daring as in the year when this chronicle is written; but the features of the place did not stare at new comers as they have done since—its rouge was then of finer quality—its attitudes were less debauched in their insolence.—Thus, as the evening of their arrival happened to be gloomy and cheerless (there really are such early autumn evenings out of England), as the now not new-married pair had been

too much thrown on each other's company during the few past days of their journey,—and as the guests at the Poland Hotel were swarming into the gay dining-room at the moment of their alighting—and as silent rumination had made the pair hungry—for once Grandeur condescended ; and my Lord and my Lady consented, by way of exception, to be obsequiously marshalled to the public table.

“ One sees always the same figures at this sort of place,” remarked Lady Caldermere, languidly ; raking the company through her jewelled eye-glass, just as if there had not been a time when such a dinner, with new men in prospect, would have filled every desire of her heart.—“ Is not that Lady Gowrie?—Look, Caldermere,—quite at the other end of the table—in blue? Poor woman, to be reduced to this for society !”

Whether Lady Gowrie was there or not,—the familiar figures and faces *were* at the table ;—the knowing Englishman, to whom such a resort as Baden stands for the great world—and such an assemblage, for life—

the man fluent about wines and hard to please in his cookery—the yet more knowing American, perfectly acquainted with all that “Victoria” was doing in the depths of her palace; and so familiar with the ups and downs of Paris existence, as to put the couple of sallow, black moustachioed Frenchmen (not modest men) to utter silence;—Kentucky having the gift of making himself heard.—There were the three spinsters, tall, bony, decked out in every colour of the rainbow, who are to be met with everywhere; and who always entrap some little withered old diplomate with a ribbon at his button-hole, to dine with them, and to order champagne.—Kentucky, too, had a competitor in volubility, universal knowledge, and the resolution to be heard. Thanks to the treble of her more acute voice, the Hebrew female beat the Southerner.

It was not easy to guess her age; so singular was the mixture of girlhood with that cool, brazen, experience which nothing distances—nothing daunts.—Her complexion, as delicate as the inside of a shell, in some lights, looked painted; and set off in cold contrast the large, unflinching blue eyes,—

as she leaned forward and coquetted busily with her fan.

“The ball, Mr. Mead? I did not dance a single dance—but I was tired, and didn’t mind for once.—It was a poor ball—Lady Gowrie looked horrid in yellow.—I never put on yellow.—What?—salmon!—it’s wretched here.—I shall go into the kitchen the first wet morning and give the cook a lesson.”

The Hebrew maiden paused.—“And so,”—the powerful twang of Kentucky was heard to announce,—“Queen Victoria declared she would not support the measure,—constitutional, or unconstitutional; her hatred to everything Russian being as well known, Mrs. Colonel Dixon,—as it is to our free country.—Those who were about her interposed with tears; but it was of no avail. She sent for the First Lord of the Treasury, Mr. Trickle of our Embassy in London assures me, and she said to him, ‘My Lord’”

“Did you sleep well, Mr. Mead? I have not had a moment’s rest since I have been in Baden. There’s a terrible old being in the next apartment, who lies in bed all day,

and coughs all night ; and with it, expectoration. And when he does not cough, I am sure he is going to cough. He's dying, I hear. They should send him somewhere else ! Fancy what one suffers, never to get a single moment's sleep—after dancing for hours."

"The regal children themselves," went on the other speaker—"have not the smallest influence ; but the reverse rather.—There was a question the other day about a pair of ponies which the Princess wanted to procure, and"

"Don't admire my necklace, *Monsieur*. Only the commonest garnets—horribly hot and heavy.—I can't bear them off, for fear of my throat.—When a string breaks—one is always breaking—I lose my voice.—You have no conception how warm they are. . . . Who did you say was at table?"—and with this the daughter of Issachar raked the range of guests through her eye-glass, as composedly as Lady Caldermere had done.

By this time Kentucky had found it necessary to raise his voice for the edification of Mrs. Colonel Dixon of Alabama ;—and

the duet in which Royal proceedings and Baden gossip formed the leading features, became so dislocated, that only fragments of either part reached Lady Caldermere. One moiety struck her ear more strangely than agreeably.

“Yes. . . . No. . . . Out of a factory, they said, originally he was—one of those vast fortunes which nobody knows how anybody makes. . . . If you break my fan, Mr. Mead, I shall have to buy another. I have broken four this week. . . . A widow—yes, she was a widow.—Austrian or Hungarian—but a mere nobody, too. . . . What did you win? Not happy together, how should they Yes, indeed, what a property to leave! . . . No children. . . . Did you see the Princess Chenzikoff on Tuesday? Hers *are* diamonds worth looking at.”

“The devotion which the very mention of rank excites in these old countries, Mrs. Colonel Dixon, is, indeed, admonitory—and is calculated to strike”

“No, Mr. Mead! Not an architect; but a young musician—quite a Prodigy—they have adopted him—and he is to marry

Not out yet, but a plain girl, who pokes, and has a Calmuck face.—She makes him play for her ; and was quite rude to papa this morning.—I wonder what can possess people with children to adopt other people's—and this was a natural child.—I was playing the other day, in the red room, something of Chopin's—I play nothing else but Chopin—and he looked in at the door, and gave me such a look, and banged the door as if he would bring the house down.—A natural child? Quite certain. Those Russians are so odd ; but not hers, certainly.”

Had Lord Caldermere as quick ears as his lady?—There was no telling by his face.—She snatched a cautious sidelong glance at him. He was eating composedly and talking to a London parliamentary acquaintance. He answered some insignificant remark of hers, in its own tone.—She never dared watch him for more than a second ; and accordingly looked to the left.

Next to her were the side of a head and an ear. The face was turned away. They belonged to a very tall man—of a full figure—with closely-cropped black hair—

but luxuriant whiskers, moustache, and beard. He was obviously alone; dining in silence. Would he turn his face?—Why did Lady Caldermere wish that he should turn his face?

Lord Caldermere claimed her, by some new remark about nothing more to the purpose than that the Hebrew maiden was reputed to be enormously rich; and that her father bore the reputation of being fatally lucky at play. “People that do not want it, always are,” was the corollary.

“You never played, Caldermere?”

“Never. You know my contempt for it,—the vilest of all excitements.”

He dropped into silence. She turned again; like one under a fascination.—The head and the ear were in precisely the same place as before. If the head would only speak to somebody, even to a waiter!—But no, it ate and drank; and to call her husband’s attention to her neighbour, was what Lady Caldermere dared not have done, had the irritation of a curiosity, hard to explain, been thrice as active as hers was.—Not for the fiftieth time only, in her married life,

she was once more compelled to maintain an air of placid composure—no matter what might be the violence done to her nature.

The tide which seemed rushing into her ears—the blood which beat in every vein, till her heart almost burst, so confused one of her senses, that further portions of the duet without concord, executed by Kentucky against the Hebrew maiden, lost all significance and meaning,—though it contained topics no less exciting, than some one “giving up her children on her wedding-day,”—and “my Lord Chancellor, Mrs. Colonel Dixon, throwing down the great seal in despair,”—and “Papa breaking the bank on Tuesday. What a joke, wasn’t it? and I got a set of agates out of it.—Look! These earrings belong to it.”—Sybil’s eyes, however, were on the alert. Her neighbour’s hand was on the table.

There was no judging of his country or age from the hand. It was a well-shaped hand—cleaner than German hands usually are. No rings were on any of the fingers.

“Now, my love,” said Lord Caldermere,

rising. "Here's Littner with your cloak ; so you need not go up-stairs, unless you please. Are you cold ? Tell Lady Caldermere's maid, Littner, to bring down a veil."

She saw the hand move on the table.—Its owner rose too, and was gone. "Who sat next me ?" she said, carelessly, to the smiling head-waiter, who bowed as they passed.

"Yes, saar. I not know—the gentleman only just come zis morning."

They walked away from the hotel.

"It is this perpetual moving about," she said to herself, "that makes me as nervous as if I had seen a ghost. But . . ." and her mind would wander away into a gloomy labyrinth, in which the only clear objects were past struggles and sorrows.—Before her was a maze of weary and monotonous paths, the end of each of which was lost in mist.

Lord Caldermere was calling her attention to the amazing *frescoes* under the arcades of the Kurhaus.

"Any news in your English letters ?" his wife replied, absently.

"Plenty of political news, as usual—and

not of the pleasantest quality,—I am glad to have found Pendragon here, to talk things over with,—and a letter from Quillsey. Everything, he says, is ready for us, and it is high time. Seven years is a year too many to wait for the most complete house in England ; and that Caldermere is, I believe.—We must make the best of it for our two selves ; since there seems to be no . . . and very satisfactory accounts, as usual, from Justin. He shall have his holiday when we get home. Never did any one deserve it better.—I suppose you write as usual to Tübingen. I don't want to hear anything about answers. This must be where they play.”

“Don't let us go in,” said Lady Caldermere, hurriedly.

“As you please ;” and the two in stately silence, or that talk *of course* which is more dreary still than silence, walked ;—and they sat down, and ate ice on the Promenade, though it was now beginning to be dark and very chilly, and listened to the mechanical music of the band in the Kiosque without hearing it.—The man had no taste, the woman had no heart,—to follow the tunes

It was a relief when that London club-mate, Lord Caldermere's dinner companion—a solid member of Parliament, of his own age or thereabouts—respectable in politics, dull in talk, a man thoroughly appreciating money and all that money could buy—joined them.—The pair were presently deep in the question of the hour, and its influences on the funds—the lady was free to lose herself in her engrossing reverie, and to ask, again and again, WHAT it was that had just now so shaken her? She walked by their side mechanically,—not heeding where they led her, till at last there were lights everywhere, and a close smell of something like hay, something like varnish,—and a sound of the chinking of money, and the monotonous “Make your game,” — “The game is made,” — “Red wins,” close around her and before her.—They were in the Pandemonium of that Paradise the Black Forest.

The sight is one to engage the cynical: because in no respect more singular than from the absence from it of that outward appearance of excitement, which innocent

folk have been used to connect with the passion and pursuit of gambling.—The players were a mixed company. Here was a showy coarse Moldavian Princess, with a couple of lovely girls, dressed in the most accurate French fashion, waiting behind her chair, with fan and smelling-bottle, and embroidered cachemire pouch, to receive her winnings—on her left a group of three men; two of whom were unmistakably French, and of no choice quality—the third, a tall, fresh-complexioned Englishman—calm enough, whatever he won or lost, to look round him, and to exchange a word or two with a travelling companion as rosy and tall as himself, who from time to time threw down his five-*franc* piece, “for the good of the house,” and no pleasure seemingly that it brought him to risk it.—Farther on, sat a neat small old lady, with the whitest of white hair, and a whiter cap, crowned with a starved little straw bonnet, with its little dyed green feather: a woman who might have been an English Vicar’s relict, to judge from her shabby genteel dress and appearance: but the avidity of whose desire was

told in the trembling of the lean veined hand that pierced the memorandum card before her with a pin, and raked in florin after florin. —Next to her a few more ambiguous men, of any or of no country—and in the middle of the table two ministers of the delectable game, in their stiff white cravats and black satin waistcoats;—looking like substantial dentists, or dull fathers of families, or dry teachers of geography; were it not for those terribly adroit hands polished and pared to a nicety; flinging out and gathering in gold and silver, as if human fingers had no other earthly use and duty.

Then there were the spectators;—a motley crew: starched lanky English female tourists, standing righteously shoulder to shoulder with French women, more fair than honest, and stupendously dressed; a pair of frank, gallant Eton boys, one drawing the other away, with—"I tell you, old fellow, you had better not;" two sallow Priests slinking about like black ghosts (if they played by deputy, Heaven forgive them!); white Austrian officers, with waists like wasps—a Hungarian with his speary

moustache and ' chin-tuft, his embroidered jacket, his well-turned calves, and his tight boots.

These were all there, and Lady Caldermere saw them—before she saw the sight, which struck her as with lightning,—which made her totter backwards against the wall, in a horror such as she had never till then dreamed of.

It was no mistake—no false vision. The child of her love, whom she had weakly given up, was sitting at that table—grown tall—grown more beautiful than ever, if that could be—with pale but not unhealthy cheeks and radiant lips, and his eyes brightened by excitement and triumph—playing gaily and audaciously—laughing to those who clustered behind him, drawn by so strange a sight—and sweeping up roll after roll of gold.

It was a blessing that Lord Caldermere had retired to a sofa with Mr. Pendragon, to sit on the vexed political question they had opened : for the extraordinary run of luck on the part of the Prodigy was beginning to awaken attention in every player at the

table. A tall, white-complexioned lady at the back of his chair, leaned over him, and whispered to him every now and then, with obvious enjoyment of his amazing success :

“ Now play your age. Good—now mine ! You see what luck I bring you !—Now stop a moment !” (and she consulted a paper). “ Rosalie’s letter says three times red, nine times black. How many times have you played black ? Seven times. Then twice more !”

“ O, nonsense !” was the Princess’s Prodigy’s saucy reply ; “ as if there was anything in your *clairvoyants*. Here’s for the red !” and Charles staked furiously on the forbidden colour : and won.

The Princess, who would rather have him win, even than her favourite oracle be proved in the right, stooped over him in an ecstasy. Her lips almost touched his long curling hair. He won again—again—again—staking recklessly, in defiance of all calculation and counsel (for now every one was watching him), and becoming, with every new success, more precious, it would seem, to her who waited on him.

How the mother hated her ! hardly able to restrain herself from rushing forward ! Then there was the Hebrew damsel who had been so shrill and voluble at dinner—fanning herself; with her lilac fan, in a fit of brainless sympathy.

There was another spectator of the Prodigy's luck, less entranced by the spectacle than the Hebrew maiden : a Hebrew man, who lost perpetually ; and who, keeping in the shadow a little solicitously, and assiduously consulting the card in the palm of the hand that was not playing, kept his eyes fixed (Lady Caldermere was aware) on the boy, without ruth or remittance.—Red, wicked eyes they were : and with every new draught of the net that brought in gold for the laughing, eager, impudent winner, they twinkled and gleamed, and the hand that lost the money took a cruel expression ; which terrified the woman, unable in the preternatural instinct of the moment, to avoid seeing many things separate—yet having the link of some connexion. But the red-eyed Hebrew slipped out, and brushed her elbow with his noisome coat, as he passed.

“Going, Meshek?” she heard a companion say, in appearance little less choice than himself.

“Ruined! Curse that boy! he will break the bank!” was the reply, with an oath, that made the listener’s blood stand still—“and look; look yonder!”—In another moment Meshek was gone.

The object of all this stir, meanwhile, was wondrously gay and careless: and to the crowning astonishment of every one, when the bank was within one cast of being broken, he pushed back his chair, swept his winnings together into the pocket of his jacket—and saying, “Come, Princess, that will do for one night, and I want my supper”—passed through the crowd rapidly with the tall lady, brushing his mother’s mantle as he got away:—and unnoticed, the agitated woman had time to observe, by her lord and master.—It was beginning now to rain—and the courier was there, announcing umbrellas without.

“Littner,” said Lady Caldermere, “you must follow that boy—that—who has won so much.—You must find out where he

lives—and come back to me directly. Five napoleons, if you are quick.—I *must* see him.—I *will* speak with him,” she gasped out, when the Mercury had disappeared—“before I sleep.”

She has been since heard to say, that of all the wretched moments of her many weary years of wedded life, those ere her messenger reappeared were the most wretched. Such a sudden rending of the walls of a prison-house, within which every feeling and affection have been griped and chained fast, cannot occur twice. Even with the most frivolous, the ruin thus made can never be repaired.—And yet, the necessity for the utmost caution never for a second quitted her mind. Might it only please the angel or demon of politics to keep her lord pré-engaged till Littner reappeared!—It did: and ere five minutes had elapsed, the courier was at her elbow. “The Princess Chenzikoff is at our hotel, my lady! He is staying with her—it is the young musician—and they give a supper this evening. Her *chasseur* told me.”

“Are you coming?” she said, almost inarticulately, to the politicians on the sofa, in

agonies to be at the hotel—though she knew not well for why.

“Presently, presently,” was her lord’s reply. “Amuse yourself with looking on a little longer. We might as well be here as anywhere else.—Then, it is your opinion, that under such a contingency . . .” and the men were a stage deeper in the great question of crisis or no crisis for the manufacturers.

The enforced pause did Lady Caldermere no good—brought her no plan, no conclusion. See her boy—speak to him—she must and would. But how was this to be done without offence to her husband?—without destroying every chance of the two coming together in tolerance, if not amicably?—That he had broken away from the path chalked out for him she had already known—and had been reproached with it as a sin not to be pardoned. That he was deep in the folly, which she had just heard stigmatised as the vilest of excitements, it would be impossible to conceal. The news was sure to go the round of the hotel. They had been talking of the boy at table.

Something told her at her heart that it was too late to interpose:—that she was cast off for ever!—But *was* it too late?—He had once loved her so passionately:—she forgot (those of her nature have a singular talent for the self-deceptions of half-memory) how she had torn this love away. She remembered rather, with a rebellious and accusing spirit, how she had for years been fixed in a vice which grew tighter and tighter, and less and less endurable with Time.

“ I believe I speak to Lady Caldermere,” was Kentucky’s modest way of accosting the agitated lady.—“ Lady Caldermere, if I am not mistaken, one of the Court ornaments of England—this is Mrs. Colonel Dixon.—You are looking on, not playing, Lady Caldermere, I perceive—so are we.—This is Mrs. Colonel Dixon, of Alabama.—The Colonel prefers remaining at the hotel over his letters: and so, I suppose, does Lord Caldermere: as I do not perceive him.—A stimulating sight, all this money lying about, Lady Caldermere.”

The reiterated use of her name brought

Sybil back to time and place.—Kentucky must have been more thick-skinned than ever he was, could he have persisted further with those two haughty eyes of astonishment fixed on him, as she moved coolly away. His twang, too, was inconvenient to the players, who cast looks of annoyance round them.

“Come, Mrs. Colonel Dixon, let you and I stake a dollar,” was his device of extrication—adding in a loud whisper to the Alabama belle—“You observe, madam, the insolent manners of the British aristocracy:—no wonder—cherished and promoted as such pride is by Queen Victoria.—But America will grant them their day.”

By this time the political question was abandoned, and Lord Caldermere was ready to return to his abode for the night.—It seemed hours, to the lady, ere they reached the hotel. But what next?

CHAPTER IV.

A RUN OF LUCK.

"You are ill," said Lord Caldermere, when the two were again in the Poland Hotel, and when candles were lighted, and she stood there tremulously tying and untying her bonnet-strings. "You are shivering from head to foot. We must have a physician. What is the matter?"

"Oh no! no! Nothing! It is only the air of those horrid rooms after the jar of the railroad. I will walk about in the corridor for half an hour. I *must* have some exercise!—I shall be quite well again before you have finished answering your letters from England."

“In the corridor—an odd fancy; but if it amuses you, do so.” He opened the door, and called into an inner room, “Marie, Lady Caldermere wants you to attend on her.”—And forthwith, after having visited her with a second searching look, he betook himself to his letters,—Mr. Pendragon having broached last intelligence from England, which made the lord as thoughtful after his fashion over some of them, as the lady was.

“Am I never to be alone?” exclaimed Lady Caldermere, almost angrily, as she began with a rapid step to pace the wide passage. At the far end of the passage hung a lamp: and she fancied, as she left her own apartments, that under this lamp she saw the owner of the head and the ear and the night-black beard, vanish into a door out of which streamed profuse light, and laughter, and some pianoforte notes.—Presently the door opened again, to admit a procession of assiduous waiters laden to the chin with covered dishes, rare fruit piled up;—champagne in ice coolers,—all the paraphernalia, in short, of an expensive

supper. There was more laughter—more of the pianoforte.—“Whose are those rooms, Marie? Do you happen to know?”

“The Princess Chenzikoff’s, my lady. Some of the party only came in to-day. They leave to-morrow. They say in the hotel, that she spends more than any ten English families like ours. She always brings large parties with her. She had a music-concert last night: and they threw peaches over the balcony to the people that were listening outside. She has a gentleman of her own, they say, who plays the piano wonderfully. And yet peaches are very scarce this season, they tell me in the hotel.”

As they spoke, Lady Caldermere drew close to the place within which something was passing that her inmost heart ached with a yearning to see. A woman’s voice, in high but not noisy merriment, was to be heard—a deep bass note or two—and next, some hoarse and broken sounds, belonging to neither woman, boy, nor man, merrier than all the rest—till there came a sudden pause;—and after this a greater but less gay confusion of tongues,—as if all of the company

were speaking at once.—The landlord of the hotel, a broad-faced smiling Swabian—came out with the Strangers' Book—and a bow to the rich English lady, who had such a strange fancy for walking about the passages with her maid.

It was her first impulse to knock at the tantalising door, to announce herself—to embrace the son whom she fancied she had never really loved till then. No one surely could think it wrong, or unnatural! Yes, there was one;—her possessor—who sat writing his letters. Should such a proceeding come to his knowledge (and every one of her proceedings did), she knew too well what the consequences would be. Not reproof: not ill usage: but a silent, unexplained tightening of the vice: and an increase of disfavour towards him for whom her heart yearned whenever she thought of him, and whose interests, till now, she had been utterly unable to advance.—She could have stamped on the ground with impatience,—but dared only listen. And presently the laughter began again, the mixed voice leading it this time:—and then the

pianoforte was touched by the hand of a first-rate master: and the playing was greeted with vehement and enthusiastic applause. Those who had neighbouring rooms in the Poland Hotel, fared ill that night as regarded quietness.

At last it became time for the listener to retire: ungratified though her craving was, and though there were no signs of the joyous assembly breaking up. What it cost her to close out the distant sounds by entering her own room, where her lord was just sealing his letters—to say, “I am quite well, Caldermere, now — and so sleepy” — passes the power of words to tell.—It was Sybil’s only chance, though, of securing the undisturbed possession of her own meditations during the long dark hours of the night.

Under the same roof with him again! with the being who had been—who was still —dearer to her than any other earthly creature! — that consciousness was of itself enough to fill the long hours with a thousand fears and fancies and regrets!—What had she gained by alienating him? A title, a splendid home, a slavery without chance

of enlargement.—Now she felt how weak she had been in more ways than one.—In her eagerness for so magnificent a position, she had overlooked that commonest caution, which every woman, or her friends for her, should exercise. She had not ventured to hint at any future—to intrigue for any provision for herself. Mr. Bower would have thought such a treaty fair and just ;—and might have acted liberally. Lord Caldermere, disappointed of an heir, and aware of the barrier of reserve which could only be so perseveringly maintained by his life's companion to hide disingenuousness, was less disposed to give an iota of predominance out of his hands. Whatever his wife asked for was magnificently supplied ; but every sum of money was paid and checked by Justin. Beyond the moment she saw no prospect—and dared not ask—still less intimate.—But this racking anxiety, painfully distinct, as it rose before her at that moment, was apart from the main, terrible care. Her boy, her once—her always dear boy!—It was some relief that she was alone ; that her tears and her tossings on her pillow, and the moans

of her bruised spirit, could be indulged in : that she had leisure, undisturbed, to go over and over and over again the chances of that night's scene coming to her husband's knowledge. On its concealment laid the last chance of son and father-in-law ever meeting on decent terms of peace !

After some hours of this distress she sank into a sleep even worse than her waking agonies had been—a sleep of dreams in which suspense succeeded to suspense, horror to horror. But in the midst of every scene, whether it was the rampart of some tower tottering to its fall over a lake of fire—whether it was an abyss of darkness full of ravenous cries drawing nearer—nearer—nearer—herself bound hand and foot to a huge pillar—whatever was the place—whatever the passion—was one face—the Face of Caldermere—the face of her murdered boy, the Prodigy—his cold, dead eyes that would not close, fixed for ever on hers, with a look of anguish and reproach such as Reason could not meet and keep its hold.—Years seemed to go over, ere she awoke, cramped and sick, and her eyes raining tears—to the

broad daylight: and the frightened face of her maid bending over her pillow.

“I touched you, my lady,” said the good-natured girl; “I was sure you were in pain by your face—and you cried out so! My lord heard it, and sent me to you.”—The lady was at once awake to all that had moved her so unexpectedly and so fearfully, and could again have wrung her hands and cried bitterly had she been alone. As it was, she had to smooth her hair (there were grey hairs that morning above her forehead which had been dark ones the night before), and to wash her eyes, and to make up a composed face ready for her husband.—The agitation noticed by him on the previous evening, had been only the herald of nightmare: so far her plan of excuse went. — Beyond this, she was powerless, except to write a few tender words of entreaty to see her boy for a moment.—By merciful chance, Lord Caldermere had gone out, leaving word that he had promised to breakfast with Mr. Pen-dragon, on business.—She would bribe Littner to be secret concerning this second

errand of his :—since on some one she must rely—not daring to present herself. But her note was never sent to Number Seven.

While her hand was on the bell to summon the courier, a sound was heard at the door :—from a hurried but decided visitor.

“Come in,” said she, faintly.—Charles came in.

She rushed to him. She clung round him. She would have smothered him with kisses—she sobbed on his shoulder ;—unable to articulate a syllable.—Then she put him from her, that she might feast her eyes on him.

He was trembling, and red with emotion—but not tearful—grasping in his two hands a small packet—looking at her directly in the face : but not speaking.

“O, Charlie, Charlie !” cried she at last, “have you—have you nothing to say to me?—How could you, could you, become a gambler at your early age?—Why have you never written in answer to my last letters?—But I forgive you. O, my boy ! my boy ! what a blessing to see you again !—Won’t you speak to me ?”

“What should I say to you, mother?” was the answer, in which, besides a tone of pride, there was a tone of suffering rarely to be heard in so young a voice.—“Become a gambler? Yes: and who set me the example?—You staked your favourite child against money and a title and a tyrant, and have lost him for ever!—I ventured a handful of money to get my freedom. I have been lucky!—There!”—and he dashed the packet on the table with a vehement gesture. “Give it him, give it the man back! It is the allowance, as he calls it, which he has sent me, since you . . . O mother! how could you make such a bargain?—Every penny is there!—I knew the day would come when I should fling it in his face.—Yes! I have gambled—and I have won. Not a penny of his money will I ever touch more!—Now let him dare to order me, with his ‘Live here,’ and ‘Study there!’—*Now* let him make Justin write preaching letters to me, and tell me that as I have chosen for myself, I must go on with what I have begun!—*Now* let him inquire when anything was to be shown for the money spent.

—I hate him! I despise him!—but I am his slave no longer!”

“But me, me, Charlie! If you are angry with *him*—have you no love left for me?”

“Love!” cried the boy, bitterly. “Did you think, because I was a child, I could be flung away, to be picked up again when you pleased?—No, mother! you would have it so. You preferred other things to . . . to . . .” There were now tears in his eyes; but he curbed them—drawing a deep breath. “Take the consequences. I will make out my own life in my own way. Never fear: I shall play no more tricks upon Lord Caldermere! I am a man now, and can show a strong will, too!—I have made friends for myself.—Never fear: I may become as great and as famous as my Lord; who knows? And then you will be glad to own me!”

“O, cruel, cruel!” sobbed the woman, made desperate by reproaches which fitted so exactly the workings of her own conscience. “Have you no affection left for me?—What will become of you, without

. . . . You are not going to play—you cannot win—every day!—Can I do nothing for you?—You do not know indeed, you *cannot* know all . . . how little free I am: and so, so very miserable!”

“Nor how you have thought of *my* misery! and how, the only time I ever asked for some help . . . Yes: I am sorry if you are unhappy, mother!—If I speak like an old man, as Justin might, who has made me old?—There’s no undoing it now!—What shall I do?—We are going into Italy. Every great lady is not ashamed of an artist, though he may not chance to be her son. When I have seen Italy, the Princess means to establish herself in Paris. Some day or other we may, possibly, come to England: if *my Lord* will allow me!—What you can do for me is this: if *my Lord* will let you!”—and he snatched a pair of scissors from Lady Caldermere’s toilet-table: cut off a couple of the long curls that flowed over his shoulders: and wound each round two small sealed rolls of paper, which he also held. “*If* you really mean to do any-

thing for me—this in the blue cover is for kind Cousin Gatty—give it into her own hands—and the other for the little Quaker girl on the Flags! Now, I must go; for we leave for Geneva at nine. Good-bye, mother! Perhaps we *may* meet again some day!” And a burning kiss was pressed to her lips: and he was not there. The gold, however, was left on the table, as a token of his presence.

He was gone! that was some relief:—a chance that the meeting of himself with his father-in-law might be averted. If so—why volunteer any report of the interview?—why transmit to Lord Caldermere what he would feel to be, not so much acquittal, as insult?—Better keep the money for some day in which that wild creature might want it: better place it in Justin’s hands:—if Justin would accept the trust in secresy.—It was amazing that, knowing her husband’s nature, and standing in awe of it, as Sybil did, she could still conceive that any good was to be done by suppression and artifice. But the weak and fickle make this mistake perpetually. They will not submit to be

ruled and constrained—even when they are the least able to emancipate themselves. She fancied some future comfort in screening the boy from the consequences of his own audacious and quixotic impudence: even though he was gone from her—on what terms, and in what sort of company, she could but imperfectly divine. Had they only stayed another day, she might have come to some explanation with Charlie's new patroness: but they were going—that very hour: and the noise of their carriages was already under her balcony.

She went out to see them depart;—a lively party of four persons in the first of three carriages—the luggage having been already despatched.—The tall figure of the Princess could not be disguised by her fantastic travelling dress. There was another lady at her side, a shade less showy. Then came her own boy—her own boy no more!—who was speaking to a tall man as he mounted the carriage, and who never looked up. The tall man had a black beard: but this was all she could see for the scarlet travelling-cap, which was pulled down about his ears. To him

must have belonged the bass voice, heard the night before at supper. The occupants of the other carriages were nothing to her. In another moment they were out of the court-yard, and lost in the Lichtenthal Alley;—and then, and not till then, did the unhappy woman feel that her darling was beyond possible reach of persuasion or control—for ever!

How long she had sat, taking home this cruel truth to her heart, she did not know. At last a step roused her; one she was accustomed to heed: Lord Caldermere sat down opposite to her, with his hands clasped on the table.

“You know,” said he, gravely, “that I have always avoided painful subjects in our intercourse as much as possible, but now I must speak.—Did you see your youngest son last night? He was playing at *rouge et noir* for some Russian woman. They did all but break the bank. I suppose she keeps herself by gambling.—Did you know he was to be there?—Did you see him?”

“I did, Caldermere,” she faltered out.

“And spoke to him, last night or this morning?”

“No no!”

“Much, *much* the better that it is so,” said my Lord, rising. — “He is gone, as you are perhaps aware. You know, too, that I never go back from my word. When I undertook to educate him, so as to humour the bent of his own fancy, it was to gratify you; against my own better judgment.—You see the end of it! One place is not good enough for him—another is too good, forsooth—and his life is frittered away, and my money.—And look, at last, he has become a spoiled hanger-on of one of those profligate Russian adventuresses!—A precious start in life!—I wash my hands of him and his concerns, Lady Caldermere.—Under a roof of mine he shall never sleep. I prohibit all secret communication with him, or from him; and request never more to hear his name mentioned. Had I not yielded, you would never have been thus disgraced;—but there must be an end put to it, once for all. Let him carve out his own way, by aid

of his new friends, and that wonderful genius, which was to do so much!—We will not allude to the subject any more.”

And with this, it seemed as if the lid of a tomb fell on the last fresh and hopeful thoughts of the resolved man's wife.—Even then, good might, perhaps, have been done, had she dared to tell the truth;—but the lie which had passed her lips was not to be taken back;—and the weight of the Prodigy's money lay heavy on her conscience, and in her clenched hand. One slow tear rolled down her cheeks; and then she rose,—in appearance as composed as her husband.

From Baden, after a stay of some wretched weeks, they returned direct to England.—Lord Caldermere, she felt, was yet further estranged from her—if such a thing were possible—than he had been.—He, too, had something at his secret heart which he did not care to show her.

“I must ask Justin—I must find out if he knows anything. But of what use my asking?—Justin is as hard as a stone to me—as all the rest are!”

Justin little dreamed of any cause of

estrangement. Till that journey, Lord Caldermere had spoken to him not frequently, but without reserve, of family affairs;—secure of his probity. He had nothing to tell his mother.—But on his return home, Lord Caldermere had a secret from Justin.—How could he condescend to confess that he had been favoured, while at Baden-Baden, with more than one anonymous letter, bidding him beware of his wife, as of a woman intriguing and false, who had never cared for any living creature in the world save one—and promising, that when time and place suited, he should receive accurate particulars concerning certain past adventures and amours of her first married life, which she had carefully concealed from him?—The letters were in different handwritings—with different postmarks—in French: and well expressed.

“Villanous, poisonous scandal!” he exclaimed, on taking the collection from his writing-case, ere leaving Baden-Baden—to destroy them.—“As if I could pay attention to such rubbish!—And yet . . .” That scene at the gaming-table, and his wife’s

confusion, had sunk into his mind. The letters were sealed up in an envelope, and replaced in the writing-case; but, of course, never mentioned to Justin. To hint at their very existence would be to give them importance.

After their return from Baden-Baden, too, Justin had a secret from Lord Caldermere;—the money so scornfully thrust into the wretched woman's hands by the Prodigy, at their bitter last leave-taking.—Loth was Justin to touch it. He urged its return; or that it should be given without aggravating message or mystery to Lord Caldermere.—“I dare not!—I dare not!” was the mother's cry of despair.—“He is too much incensed as it is.—He says he has done with Charles for ever!—He has changed ever since that night.”

“Then will you tell Charles, at least, that you have not paid it over?”

“Worse and worse! It would only bring some insulting letter—provoke the boy to do something still wilder and wilder; perhaps to gamble again. No! no! . . . please God they can be kept asunder—they are both so

determined. Your brother was as fierce as a full-grown man.—But if he can keep steady—and become famous—and as seems likely, is noticed among great people—who knows what Time may do?—It is our last chance.”

And, for the only time in his life, Justin consented to a compromise, in despite of his better reason ;—and allowed himself to be persuaded secretly to take charge of the money so strangely gotten.

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